

THE REALISM OF GEORGE MOORE

An Abstract of a Thesis by
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The problem. The realist novels of George Moore are extremely unlike one another in content and technique. While scholars have studied in detail the French influences in Moore's writing, the question of whether Moore was something more than an imitator of French fiction and whether he contributed something new to the English realist tradition has not been studied.

Procedure. The multifarious literary currents in England during the Nineties were examined. Then George Moore's realist novels were studied with respect to their links with the naturalism of Zola. Finally, the novels of Moore were compared to those of Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy with regard to elements of realism. One typical novel of each author was examined in detail, and references were made to other novels of the three writers.

Findings. It was found that Moore brought to the English novel a distinctly new creation in realism. His borrowing from French naturalism was selective and superficial. Moore created a realist novel that was highly objective in tone and technique, concentrating on the cerebral reality of the individual, who for the first time in English fiction, was not a representative of a distinct and strong social environment.

Conclusion. While Moore's novels will probably never be ranked beside those of Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy as the great novels of the English language, Moore will be regarded as one who not only sought and found inspiration outside of the English tradition but also contributed something new and different to the tradition of the realist novel.

The Realism of George Moore

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Chapter I

Introduction

Literary historians are hard put to assess the legacy of George Moore. He founded no school, and there is no typical Moore novel or Moore world, as there is a Hardy world or a Dickens world. Also, Moore wrote both abominable and first-rate fiction. Furthermore, Moore promoted himself as the hero of many anecdotes and sexual escapades, and his unpredictable, iconoclastic attacks on others won him the enmity of many of his contemporaries. Moore's novels and autobiographical works appeared between 1883 and 1930 and represent their author's experimentation with several schools of writing. From 1880 until 1894 Moore wrote under the influence of French realism. After an interim of six years, during which he wrote novels and shorter prose works based on themes of religious experience, music, and celibacy, his Irish period began. From 1901 until 1911 Moore lived in Dublin, and his writing during this period is based on Irish life and the activities of the Irish Literary Theater, of which Moore was a co-founder with Yeats and Edward Martyn. The final period, 1912 to 1930, is characterized by historical romances in narrative form and the use of folklore, fable, and Biblical material. During these years, when he lived in Ebury Street, London, Moore established himself as a literary

critic and perfected his own individual style.

Literary critics and historians do not agree as to what George Moore's greatest literary contribution was. Some point to the esoteric The Brook Kerith (1916), which is based on the lives of Jesus, St. Paul, and Joseph of Arimathea, noting that it represents the perfected, unique style of George Moore. Others maintain that it was in his autobiographical writings, either Confessions of a Young Man (1888) or Hail and Farewell (1911 to 1914), that Moore's greatest contribution to English letters was made. Yet the works of Moore's latter years, unique in style and superbly polished though they are, were not written for the reading public, but were published in expensive, limited editions for a small circle of fellow writers. Heloïse and Abelard, The Brook Kerith, Ulick and Soracha, and Aphrodite in Aulis must be read mainly for their style, and a resurgence of interest in these works is unlikely. Some critics suggest that Joyce's Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man would not have been written had Moore not published the highly subjective, controversial, and rambling Confessions of a Young Man. This may be so, but James Joyce never acknowledged indebtedness to Moore. Research has yet to uncover a key role for Moore's autobiographical writings in shaping the form and content of subsequent spiritual and literary autobiographies. Moore's most significant contribution to English literature is to be sought in the early period, when he wrote under the influence of the French realists. It will be seen that Moore's realism is distinctly different from the realism created by other

writers of the Victorian era. It was the result of his adaptation of French techniques and his reaction against the English literary tradition.

Graham Hough, in his Image and Experience, chooses the years 1880 to 1910 as a period that is distinctly un-Victorian and yet by no means modern. He points out the futility of forcing the dates 1837 to 1901 into some meaningful pattern in the history of English literature. Most of the giants of Victorian prose had died by 1880, and the transitional period, he states, is typified by three tendencies: (1) increased freedom in the choice and use of subjects from real life, (2) widespread adherence to ideals of art for art's sake, and (3) a decisive reaction against the English literary tradition.¹

The 1880's were characterized by events related to the Empire, which by then spread around the globe. There was war in Afghanistan, the occupation of Egypt, and the attempt to occupy the Sudan. The Irish Question emerged. The Naval Defense Act was passed to meet the growing seapower of Russia and France. The decade 1890 to 1900 saw the beginning of the Boer War, the emergence of the Labour Party, the rise of trade unionism, the founding of the Fabian Society, and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The events of the years 1900 to 1910 included passage of the Education Act, the accession of Edward VII, the settlement of Rhodesia, and the signing of several pacts with foreign governments: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Anglo-French

¹ Graham Hough, Image and Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), pp. 181-184.

Entente, and the Anglo-Russian Entente. History shows Great Britain being forced more and more out of her insularity by events abroad during these decades.

Edward VII, who crossed the Channel many times a year as Prince of Wales and as king to take cures at German spas, dine in French restaurants, and represent his government officially, came to be known as l' oncle de l' Europe. He represents Britain's increasing awareness of continental culture.

G.B. Shaw championed the dramas of social and domestic themes by Henryk Ibsen. American and Russian novels became more and more popular in England. But English culture was predominantly characterized by Francophilia. Swinburne, Wilde, Whistler, Arnold Bennett, Arthur Symons, Conrad, Walter Pater, George Moore, and others sought inspiration at the feet of Gallic mentors. The novels of Henry James are ostentatiously laced with passages in French.

In the 1880's decadence was vogue in France. Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé were the chief spokesmen for this post-romantic reaction against the bourgeois. Their tastes inclined toward the morbid and the perverse; their behavior and dress were often unconventional. Their interests were in the aesthetic. Rimbaud attacked Verlaine with a knife, and Verlaine shot and wounded his assailant. Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud led deliberately debauched lives as alcoholics and sexual perverts.

Oscar Wilde in his velveteen shorts and silk stockings was the principal exponent of decadence and aestheticism on the

English side of the Channel. His Dorian Gray is unsurpassed as a study in decadence. Simeon Solomon was imprisoned and died in a workhouse. Aubrey Beardsley's fantastic, erotic drawings represented the world of vice and excess pictorially. Ernest Dowson experimented with drugs and shared Verlaine's taste for absinthe. Lionel Johnson, an alcoholic and a homosexual, died when he fell from a chair in a pub and fractured his skull. Symons, Max Beerbohm, Moore, and others brought the works of French decadents before the English reading public in such magazines as The Yellow Book. In England fin-de-siècle became synonymous with art for art's sake and decadence, which meant in practical terms, personal license and revolt against society's traditional pressures of morality.

French realism was allied with the French aesthetic movement in its refusal to be subservient to middle-class conventions and sensibilities. It was based on an understanding of science, particularly Darwin and Claude Bernarde, which applied the laws of matter to the study of human beings. Balzac became the first to write in this vein in La Comédie Humaine (1842). He was followed by Flaubert, Maupassant, the brothers Goncourt, and Zola. The chief English practitioners were Arnold Bennett, George Gissing, and, of course, George Moore.

The period 1880 to 1910 is characterized by a remarkable heterogeneity in the works of English men of letters. One finds, in addition to the decadent writings and the new realist works, the socialist propaganda of Shaw, the mysteries and historical adventures of A. Conan Doyle, the adventurous descriptions of

a caretaker empire in Kipling, the sea-stories of the commercial side of imperialism in Conrad, the travel stories of Stevenson, and the science fiction of H.G. Wells. Graham Hough observes that there is no truly typical figure in literature during this time, but that if one were to study the period through the life and works of one writer, that writer would be George Moore.² A greater figure such as Shaw, Hardy, or Henry James would not do, for each of them is too idiosyncratic. Moore, in his experimentation with various prose forms, his autobiographical writings and his role as influential critic, is a key figure in the transition between Victorian literature and modern literature.

Born February 24, 1852, to an Anglo-Irish landlord family in County Mayo, Ireland, George Moore was so slow in reading and writing that he promised no success in any field as an adult. He attended Oscott, a Roman Catholic school near Birmingham, where he accomplished very little. Moore's father removed his son to a military school, but the elder Moore's death in 1870 saved young George from a military career. In 1873 George Moore went to Paris, intending to become a painter under the tutelage of the French impressionists. He soon realized that he had not the requisite talent, so he turned to poetry. Failing at this too, he decided to become a novelist. Moore was pitifully ill equipped for a career in letters. He could not spell or punctuate an English sentence, and he was quite ignorant of the English literary tradition.

² Hough, pp. 179-180.

But George Moore dedicated himself wholly to his art and overcame these obstacles to begin a long and successful career. Through a series of accidents this career began in French realism, and it was in the first period of his life as a writer, before he developed and perfected his individual style and before he became a noted critic, that Moore was to make his most significant contribution to English literature.

Hough and other critics have seen in Moore a vehicle for the study of the literature of the transitional period. The critics have examined the influence of the French realists on Moore in much detail. Douglas Hughes has shown that A Mummer's Wife is indebted to Madame Bovary and L'Assommoir for characters and theme.³ The use of a servant girl as the subject of a novel in Esther Waters, critics note, is a French convention. Graham Owens points out parallels between A Drama in Muslin and several French works, noting, for example, that Alice Barton is a version of Mademoiselle Corman in Balzac's Une Vieille Fille and that the pursuit of husbands by mothers of marriageable daughters derives from Zola's Pot-Bouille.⁴ He shows that the doltish husband and the frustrated, nervous wife who is attracted to a sexually more pleasing man in A Mummer's Wife comes from Zola's Thérèse Raquin and that Kate's success as a performer is comparable to events in the life in Zola's Nana.⁵ Walter Ferguson's

³ Douglas Hughes, ed., The Man of Wax (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. xi.

⁴ Graham Owens, ed., George Moore's Mind and Art (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 32.

⁵ Owens, p. 30.

work, The Influence of Flaubert on George Moore, is a painstaking compilation of passages in Moore's novels that are strikingly similar to passages in the works of Flaubert.

Studies of Moore seldom consider wherein Moore departed from the French realists, and more importantly, they do not examine the question of what Moore created that was distinctly unlike earlier and contemporary English realism in terms of theme, plot, style, and characterization.

The examination of Moore's contribution to English realist literature will begin with an analysis of the naturalism of Emile Zola, in whom Moore found his first inspiration. Then two pertinent works of Zola and Moore will be compared, and the development of Moore's realism in subsequent works will be studied. Finally, Moore's realism will be compared to that of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy to determine the nature of Moore's departure from the English realist tradition.

Chapter II

George Moore and Emile Zola

Emile Zola, born in 1840, was twelve years older than George Moore. He was born into a world that had inherited a tradition of secularism and emphasis on science from the French Revolution. Zola, having grown up in extreme poverty in the Rue de Saint-Jacques in Paris, brought much personal experience to the social novel, which he termed le roman de mœurs. His L' Assommoir, which appeared serially in Le Bien Public in 1877, was to be one of twenty naturalistic works based on the lives of the Rougon Macquart family and exploring scientifically the lives of the working poor, alcoholics, whores, panderers, cuckolds, and brutes. With the furor and clamor occasioned by the publication of L' Assommoir Zola became overnight France's most prominent man of letters. In 1880 billboards all over Paris read READ NANA! The public eagerly consumed Nana, the story of the daughter of the drink-sodden Gervaise Macquart of L' Assommoir grown up and become a courtesan. Thus the series began.

A coterie of naturalists including Huysmans, Alexis, Ceard, Maupassant, and Hennique had gathered around Zola, who was pictured in the newspapers on the back of a sow, trailed by suckling pigs.¹ Zola and his disciples defended the new school

¹ Matthew Josephson, Zola and His Time (New York: McCauley Co., 1928), p. 232.

vigorously. Zola pointed out to the critics of L' Assommoir that he was not merely groveling in a fetid scenario of poverty for the sake of some perverse pleasure. He had a moral:

Educate the worker, take him out of the misery in which he lives, combat the crowding and the promiscuity of the workers' quarters where the air thickens and stinks; above all prevent the drunkenness which decimates the people and kills mind and body.....I am no maker of fairy-tales, and I feel that the only way to attack evil is with a hot iron.²

In the polemic essay "The Experimental Novel" Zola seeks to provide a rationale for the naturalistic novel. He divides writer into two camps: the idealists, who write in the tradition of theology and philosophy, and who have been chiefly romanticists; and the naturalists, who write under the influence of science and the experimental method. As a basis for the new literature, the forerunners of which were Balzac and Flaubert, according to Zola, he chooses the Introduction à L' Étude de la Médecine Expérimentale by Claude Bernard. This work is particularly appropriate because Zola believed that what Bernard was trying to do for medicine could be applied to the novel as well. Bernard aimed to transform medicine, still widely conceived of as an art, into a science.

Zola and Bernard both argue against the "vitalists," who insist upon a supernatural and irrational component in the make-up of man. Zola maintains that although comparatively little is yet known to scientists, living beings and inanimate objects will ultimately be found to be subject to the same laws, that

² As quoted in Josephson, p. 233.

"a like determinism will govern the stones of the roadway and the brain of man."³ Acknowledging that cerebral processes are much more complex than mineral matter, Zola admonishes fellow naturalistic novelists to regard themselves as the colleagues of the scientist, saying, "In one word, we should operate on the characters, the passions, on the human and social data, in the same way that the chemist and the physicist operate on inanimate beings and as the physiologist operates on living beings."⁴ The individual was to be studied in terms of his heredity and, because man is not alone, the social conditions that surround him and modify the phenomena. "Indeed our great study is just there in the reciprocal effect of society on the individual and the individual on society."⁵

While the idealist leaps to conclusions and attempts to answer "why," the savant naturalist, full of self-doubt, but never doubting the experimental method, is led by observation and experiment to answer the more appropriate question, "how." The experimental novelist is a humble man who does not proceed on personal authority, but submits only to the authority of his method. Indeed, Zola claimed he could not write a plot in the ordinary sense, for events dictated succeeding events, and thus the story unfolded. Zola explained that there was no school of

³ Emile Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, trans. Belle M. Sherman (New York: Haskell House, 1964), p. 71.

⁴ Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, p. 19.

⁵ Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, p. 44.

naturalism with a founder and a leader, that "it is nothing but a vast movement, a march forward in which everyone is a workman, according to his genius...."⁶

To prepare himself to write a "document novel," as Josephson calls it, Zola would read books, consult known authorities, sketch characters from real life, read newspaper clippings, and go into the field with notebook in hand to study laundries and laundresses. He even got himself invited to soirees, where it was whispered around, "It is Zola. He is here to take notes."⁷

What is not clear is what Zola meant by "experimentation" as it is to be applied to the novel. Experiment implies test groups and control groups observed under laboratory conditions. In the Rougon-Macquart novels the principal evidence of the scientific method is nothing more than a cool and detailed observation of the characters and their living conditions as though they were under a microscope. Zola implies something beyond observation, but he does not define it clearly, nor is the meaning evident in his novels.

In order to assess and describe George Moore's contribution to realism in English fiction, we must compare his A Mummer's Wife with the work that served him as a model, Zola's L' Assommoir. Both works deal with alcoholism, and both are written under the influence of le naturalisme, la vérité, la science. L' Assommoir was Zola's seventh novel and his first

⁶ Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, p. 44.

⁷ Josephson, p. 261.

masterpiece when it appeared in 1877. Although the work was both acclaimed and disparaged upon its publication, it does not seem to have commanded George Moore's attention until after he had read Zola's statement on naturalism in "The Experimental Novel" in 1880.

In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore recounts his reaction to the discovery of Zola, saying, "I stood dumb before the vastness of the conception of a new art based on science, an art that should explain all things and embrace modern life in its entirety."⁸ In his preface to the 1966 edition of A Mummer's Wife, Walter J. Miller suggests that Moore's attraction to the positivism of the naturalists lay partly in the fact that Moore realized himself to be very much the product of his Anglo-Irish ancestry and milieu.⁹ Certainly Moore exhibited an unending interest in his forebears and in the influence of his changing environment from the time he described himself as "a smooth sheet of wax, bearing no impress, but capable of receiving any."¹⁰ Not only did Moore see in naturalism the possibility of self-knowledge, however; he was also looking for a medium, and associating his name with that of the great Zola might bring him recognition.

So Moore set out to be what he termed "Zola's ricochet in

⁸ George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (Montreal: McGill's Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 95.

⁹ George Moore, A Mummer's Wife, ed. Walter J. Miller (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1966), p. v.

¹⁰ Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 49.

England" and to épater le bourgeois. A Modern Lover (1883), revised in 1917 under the title Lewis Seymour and Some Women, was his first work inspired by naturalism. It is the story of a mediocre, effeminate, and amoral painter who thrives parasitically through romantic alliances with three women. The work met with criticism because the painter did not suffer for his transgression of the accepted moral code, and because a young girl posed unclothed as a model for the painter. Little is made of heredity and environment, and there is no real Zolaesque language. The inspiration of Zola is seen only in Moore's clinical observation of the principal character. In Confessions of a Young Man he describes how he used Marshall, his roommate in Paris, as a model for Lewis:

And so my friend became to me a study, a subject for dissection. The general attitude of his mind and its various turns, all the apparent contradictions and how they could be explained, classified, and reduced to one primary law, were to me a constant source of thought....There was much that Marshall could teach me, and I used him without shame, without stint.¹¹

The disjointed thinking of the young painter contemplating suicide because of his lack of success and the cold calculation with which he plans to use each woman are described with merciless reality. But A Modern Lover is such an attenuated expression of naturalism that it has but little to offer to our study. A Mummer's Wife, which appeared in 1884, was undeniably naturalistic.

¹¹ Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, pp. 57-61.

Perhaps the first difference between A Mummer's Wife and L' Assommoir that strikes the reader is that of language. Zola, who portrays the most abject of the poor, and who had been one of them, employs a great deal of their lively slang in his dialogue and description. Coupeau proposes to Gervaise, saying, "Come on, let's decide on tonight to begin warming each other's tootsies."¹² At dinner Coupeau meows as he notes that the rabbit they are eating looks more like "a back-fence rabbit."¹³ Of a laundress one character says, "That cuty Clémence had the damndest tits."¹⁴ The Coupeaus' sexually precocious daughter, Nana, is often referred to as a "chickie." A clothesline in a tenement "flaunted a diaper still plastered with baby turd."¹⁵

While Zola's language is replete with vulgar slang and obscenity, George Moore's language is restrained and formal. Zola uses much more dialogue, while conversation is often sparingly interspersed in lengthy descriptive passages in Moore. Although Moore describes Kate Ede vomiting on her dress in a coach, refers to her baby as "that puling pulp," and shows the alcoholic heroine on her death-bed, "her stomach enormously distended by dropsy,...her arms now wasted to mere bones,"¹⁶ he does not dwell on the nauseatingly grotesque as does Zola.

In Zola's novel Gervaise finds her unkempt husband and his

¹² Emile Zola, L' Assommoir, trans. Atwood H. Townsend (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 49.

¹⁴ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 95. ¹⁵ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 165.

¹⁶ Moore, A Mummer's Wife, p. 427

friends drinking at L' Assommoir, "their ill-tended beards stiff and yellowish like toilet-bowl brushes."¹⁷ When Nana shows signs of growing up to be a terror, Boches observes with vulgar philosophy that "children pushed up out of poverty just as mushrooms grow out of manure."¹⁸ The most repelling description of all is the last one of the book, that of the discovery of Ger-vaise's death in the hall closet in which she has been living. After other inhabitants of the tenement notice a bad smell, the heroine's body, already turning green, is found behind the door.

Had he wished to do so, Moore might have been as sickeningly graphic in his descriptions of Ralph Ede's asthma, Kate's advanced pregnancy, the death of the baby girl, the prostitutes, and Kate in the final throes of dipsomania. The critic of the Spectator wrote of Moore after the publication of A Modern

Lover:

One is made aware by certain passages that Mr. Moore would fain imitate the methods of Zola and his odious school, but two obstacles are in his path--the faith of a Christian and the instincts of a gentleman; the author recognises and respects goodness, purity and disinterestedness, and if M. Zola or any of the hogs of his sty could write such an episode as that with which the story opens, the work-girl's sacrifice for the penniless artist, one would have as much hope for their future as for that of Mr. Moore.¹⁹

One does find a few earthy and grotesque descriptive passages in Moore's A Drama in Muslin and in Parnell and His Island, but

¹⁷ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 362. ¹⁸ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 174.

¹⁹ As quoted in Joseph Hone, The Life of George Moore (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 96.

these seem almost nothing more than an obligatory acknowledgment that the works have been written under the influence of naturalism.

Perhaps George Moore was restrained by "the instincts of a gentleman," but one must also recall that he had been a more or less intimate associate of Manet, Degas, and the other Impressionists at the Nouvelles Athènes for several years and was to become a respected art critic. Not only does Moore avoid the grotesque in A Mummer's Wife, he occasionally indulges in descriptions of beauty. He allows a blue light to settle on Kate's shining black hair and a flush to illuminate her pale olive complexion. One never finds such indulgence in Zola, who, in spirit, is more akin to Hieronymus Bosch than to Manet.

Zola's language and tone present a cynical and ironical humor, while George Moore is detached and objective. Zola writes, "As for Coupeau, to be continually brushing against her skirts inflamed him more and more. He was caught and good."²⁰ Nana and her little friends are seen playing "funeral." After the wedding dinner for Coupeau and Gervaise, Lorilleux suggests that the group go to the Père Lachaise Cemetery to the tomb of Heloïse and Abelard. Instead they go to the Louvre, where Zola laughs at them as they laugh at the Phoenician sculptures with their illegible writing and snigger at the nudes. The reader sometimes laughs with Zola in spite of himself, but more often the humor in L' Assommoir is too black and degrading to the

²⁰ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 55.

characters for laughter.

One finds barely a trace of humor in the deadly serious pages of Moore's novel, and it is more good-natured than anything else. The actor Dick Lennox is a corpulent, easy-going man who does not always have the most dignified parts in stage productions. This is a touch of realism rather than of humor. Moore allows Kate to sing the wrong music in a performance when her brain is addled by alcohol and adulation, but the intent is pathos, not humor.

According to the tenets of naturalism the characters and action are to be derived from environment and heredity. In An American Tragedy Theodore Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths and Roberta Alden are lower-class victims of their environment, the chief ingredient of which is the powerful American Dream of success through being good and industrious. In the dramas of Gerhardt Hauptmann alcoholism, suicide, and brutality appear in successive generations of families. As one would expect, heredity and milieu play a vital role in L' Assommoir. Gervaise's mother is described as a "hard worker who had died in harness after serving Père Macquart like a beast of burden for more than twenty years."²¹ Gervaise had been so abused by her cruel and domineering father that she ran away from home to live with Lantier when she was only fourteen. Coupeau's father, a roofer like his son, had "squashed his brains out" when he fell drunk from the roof on which he was working. Nana, the daughter of

²¹ Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 44.

Gervaise and Coupeau, becomes an experienced courtesan at a very early age because she has observed her mother's sexual behavior and because the flower-makers with whom she works are all street-walkers.

The rotgut of "L' Assommoir" is ever present in the novel, even before the "serious" drinking begins about midway. Early in the novel Gervaise states that liquor always gives her the creeps. There are many references to Coupeau's moderation in drinking before he becomes an idle drunkard after his accident. In preparation for an eating and drinking orgy, which is described in terms of some animal's feeding frenzy, Clemence gives herself an enema in order that she can consume more. At another such feast Boches is the envy of all the men for the enormous amount of food and drink that he can put away. Great mouthfuls are consumed as if by ravenous animals; bellies are swollen; and afterward clothes and linen are left stained.

Zola also directs the attention of the reader to the foul odors of dirty laundry, sweaty bodies, burnt lard, pipes, cheap brandy, and onions cooking in the tenement. One even hears dishes clattering, saucepans being sloshed clean, children crying, and adults arguing.

Besides the gustatory, the olfactory, and the auditory, there is the even more powerful visual. The street is "slimy with black muck." There is the filthy diaper hanging overhead. The wedding party comes to the Seine, "an oily sheet studded

with bottle corks, vegetable peelings, quantities of refuse...."²²

A soiled surplice lies on the altar in the church.

There is much actual and reported violence in L' Assommoir, beginning with a fight between Gervaise and Virginie, in the course of which the heroine exposes everything her rival has. A mother and later her little girl are beaten by the woman's drunken husband.

In A Mummer's Wife there is no thorough treatment of environment and heredity, although the dark determinism of naturalism is still felt. Certainly many of the differences between the two novels are due to the fact that while Zola was describing the poorest of the poor, George Moore had chosen a lower middle-class milieu.

When Moore set out to write the novel, he was looking for the ugliest town in England. At the Gaiety Bar he was told that this was Hanley, one of the Five Towns of the industrial midlands. Moore set out for Hanley with pen and notebook. He toured the potteries, walked through the streets, and mingled with the people. He also traveled briefly with a troupe of actors.

Apparently George Moore had no gift for evoking an atmosphere, nor did this interest him as it did Zola, Hardy, and Dickens. He simply states that Hanley is an ugly little town of bricks of many colors, scarlet tile roofs, iron, and smoke set in a circle of gray hills. His "shrill scream of the tram"

²² Zola, L' Assommoir, p. 91.

fall flat. As to Kate's home in Hanley, Moore creates an atmosphere of mild Methodism and mild asthma. Ralph Ede is seen wheezing on the sofa, and his mother reads the Bible. There is nothing pernicious in this environment. At best one could say it is bleak, but it is a very bland bleak.

As the novel progresses, Moore pays even less attention to environment. One has no special feeling about the theater or the general surroundings in which the actors move about. There are scattered references to alcohol, cheap scent, and bare flesh, but these have almost no effect. When Kate and Lennox are down on their luck after the breaking up of the actors' company, they take rooms in Manchester, but no description of their quarters is offered. Their passage from Manchester to London goes almost unnoticed. Whereas Gervaise died in a "cubbyhole" in a tenement, Kate dies in an undescribed room in an undescribed neighborhood. When Kate consorts with prostitutes, nothing is said of the surroundings.

Nor is heredity of great importance in A Mummer's Wife. Kate was raised by her mother, who painted pottery for a living. Mother and daughter suffered no hardship, and nothing is said to indicate the character of her deceased father. He had been neither a dipsomaniac nor a neer-do-well. It is stated that Kate's Methodism never took a strong hold on her, and although she has relapses in which she feels a sense of sin and guilt after she elopes with the sensuous actor, Dick Lennox, there is no convincing moral agitation. These are merely fleeting

moments. That Kate dies singing choked lines of Wesleyan hymns alternated with verses from the hit songs of her stage days would seem to indicate that Moore intended a major statement about environment and heredity. There are times when Kate wishes for a home with a fireside, yet the conflict between her uprooted life and the middle-class desire for stability is so muted that it is negligible.

In The Lake (1905), Moore's novel of the spiritual struggle of a priest, the author obviously intended a powerful role for nature, for Father Oliver Gogarty associates the lake mystically with Nora Gwynn, a young girl with whom he has an epistolary relationship of a spiritual nature. But in spite of the beautifully penned descriptions of nature, the mysticism and magnetism of natural surroundings are not attained as they are in Dreiser's rural death scene, which acquires a strange and ghostly "chemical-electrical" aura in An American Tragedy. Through the descriptions of physical surroundings as well as through the mental life of Florence Dombey, Dickens creates an atmosphere of somber lifelessness in the old patrician house in Dombey and Son. Likewise, he uses the inner being of his characters to create dehumanized industrial life in Hard Times. In George Moore we find none of the subtlety of Dickens and none of the blunt but vivid statements of Zola.

Moore was unable to create a powerful environment or intricate relationships between characters and milieu. Kate Ede does not become the victim of family heredity, Wesleyan religion,

or even her middle-class background. She is rather the victim of certain ill-defined individual instincts which entrap her in a pattern of discontent, jealousy, and illogical thinking, which leads to the abuse of alcohol, and death. Moore's determinism is the conviction that a man's instincts sometimes get him into a groove from which he is powerless to extricate himself. He does not establish a causal relationship between these instincts and environment and heredity.

Another great difference between Zola and his ricochet in England is in the portrayal and handling of characters. A glance through the pages of L' Assommoir shows a very large cast, including many actors with minor roles. Only Gervaise and Coupeau are much developed. Zola's superficial sketches of the Lorieuxs, Virginie, Clemence, Étienne, Boches, Madame Fauconnier, Bijard, Lalie Bijard, Adèle, Mama Coupeau, the Goujets, Père Bru, Pauline, the Poissons, and others serve mainly to create the environment and to show how pervasive and hopeless the sordid degradation of lower-class life is. These people represent brutalized and corrupted childhood, petty jealousy, pitiful old age, pointless industry, promiscuous sexuality, animal gluttony, debasing and widespread alcoholism, villainous violence, and general spiritual and moral depravity. The minor characters are attenuated versions of the major persona, themselves types of poverty.

In Zola's preparatory notes for L' Assommoir, he instructs

himself, "Do not flatter the working-class nor blacken it."²³ In writing the novel he followed this guideline carefully. M. Goujet is a hard-working, simple-minded, good-hearted man, while M. Bijard is a violent drunkard who beats his wife and little girl to death. Nana Coupeau is a terror of a child and a sexual animal, while little Lalie Bijard is a saintly sufferer who mothers her younger brothers and sisters. But Goujet's industriousness does not enable him to escape from poverty, and Lalie's patient endurance ends in death from her father's constant beatings. Gervaise, as we shall see, is a mixture of admirable and unattractive qualities.

People are likened to animals in typical naturalistic fashion. Gervaise and Virginie fight like angry hens. Two men fight like big roosters for the favors of a little white hen. Gervaise's mother lived like a beast of burden and died "in harness." Some priests are likened to "greedy animals" and "black crows." Epithets like "lousy pig" are hurled about.

While some of Zola's characters have admirable traits and are capable of good deeds, none is truly attractive. In Moore's A Mummer's Wife, which has many fewer minor characters, there is not one character who is despicable. The delineation of even these minor characters is complex, though not complete, and never stereotypical.

Ralph Ede is hardly lovable, but he is fully human. The reader sympathizes with a man who becomes petulant and peevish

²³ As quoted in Josephson, p. 499.

when he is ill, but who is otherwise diligent and affable. Ede is more tolerant in religious matters than is his mother, but he never disparages her practice of religion. His behavior toward the roomer, the mummer Dick Lennox, is kindly and not motivated by jealousy or suspicion. Ralph Ede is, however, unimaginative and unromantic and hence incapable of satisfying the dreamy Kate.

Mrs. Ede is not a hackneyed religious bigot and persecuting mother-in-law. This portrayal is also to Moore's credit. In spite of her hypersensitivity in moral matters, her church-going, and the repeated "I am a Christian woman," she is not the bothersome, self-righteous, carping old biddy of stereotype. She genuinely loves her daughter-in-law, and Kate misses this devoted affection after she runs away with Lennox.

Miss Hender is Kate's strong-willed, dependable dress-making assistant. She is a worldly young woman through whom Kate glimpses a larger, more exciting world beyond the confines of her dull marriage and the drapery business. Miss Leslie is a talented actress and a generous young woman, the only one of the females of the acting troupe who is kind to and not jealous of Kate.

Montgomery is an altogether sympathetic man. He is a physically ugly little musician who adores Kate in silence. Her walk with him to the seashore, during which she learns that seawater is salty, is a tender and memorable scene. He is genuinely concerned about Kate's happiness, and it is he who calls to Dick's attention the fact that he is neglecting Kate and ought

to marry her or give her her freedom. The reader sees that the quiet, kindly musician has a deeper nature than does Lennox and would be a better mate for a woman of Kate's temperament.

Mrs. Laura Forest, an intellectual and a former mother superior, becomes Dick Lennox's companion and mentor after Kate has sunk irretrievably into dipsomania. Her objective understanding of the Lennoxes' unhappy marriage, her own past love affairs, her belief in reincarnation, her travel, and her creative intellectual endeavors make her the most complex character in the novel. As we discuss and compare the major figures in both novels, we will see more evidence of the variety, complexity, and psychological subtlety in Moore's delineation of character.

Helplessness in their addiction to alcohol is about all Gervaise Coupeau and Kate Ede have in common. Zola's heroine is a woman with a potential for success, and had she been born into better circumstances, she would have prospered and bloomed. She recognizes the mistake of her extramarital alliance with Lantier. When he leaves her, she overcomes her initial despair, setting out courageously to work hard as a laundress that she might raise her two little sons to be good citizens. Gervaise is an attractive blonde, who, however, has a limp which worsens with the deterioration of her position in life. She is a generous woman who takes in her aged and blind mother-in-law when Mama Coupeau's own selfish daughter will have nothing to do with the old woman. She shows kindness to old Père Bru, who cannot

support himself because of advanced age. After she marries the hard-working Coupeau, Gervaise prospers for a few years, saves money, and lays plans for a better future.

Yet L' Assommoir lurks behind every silver-lined cloud, waiting for its victims. Coupeau falls from a roof and survives only physically. Embittered and morally enervated, he turns to drink. The destruction of the weak-willed Gervaise begins with her husband's drinking. She soon becomes lazy, fat, and addicted to alcohol herself.

The Coupeaus' situation worsens again when Gervaise's former lover, Lantier, returns and moves in with them. This ménage à trois becomes complicated when Gervaise must sleep with Lantier one night because Coupeau, drunk as usual, has vomited all over himself and the bed. From then on the observant little Nana watches and learns as she sees her mother servicing two beds every night. The parasitical Lantier moves on when the Coupeaus' finances dwindle, and Gervaise's downfall continues. She is soon seen accepting spoiled meat from a butcher and scraps from a kindly restaurateur, and she even rummages through the garbage to supply the family table. Her degradation is complete when she is seen doing an imitation of the delirium tremens of her dying husband at the request of the Lorilleuxs. She is found dead and stinking in a closet, and Zola gives poverty as the cause of death.

The forces of poverty crush all the good instincts in Gervaise and rob her of her dignity. It is as though L' Assommoir were a liquor-filled pit at the foot of the hill of poverty,

down which its victims must roll. Gervaise's corruption begins in her childhood, which is made intolerable by her violent, drinking father. She "escapes" into a relationship with Lantier which is almost equally miserable, for he too drinks to excess. Gervaise does not step blindly into her next relationship. Although she has learned caution from her previous experiences, fate and the exigencies of poverty bring her back to alcohol and its destruction.

Kate Ede has more in common with Emma Bovary than with Gervaise Coupeau. As in the case of Madame Bovary, Kate's tastes in life are derived from romantic novels. Both are women of complex instincts and emotions. Like Gervaise, Kate Ede might have survived had the conditions of life been different. Had she married a more attentive, indulgent, yet romantic man, or had she even remained with Ralph Ede, Kate might have survived.

A glimpse of the exciting world of the mummer and the sympathetic attentions of the sensuous actor Dick Lennox convince Kate that her world of asthma, religion, and dressmaking is narrower than life need be. She begs Lennox to take her away, and the fat little actor, who is attracted to her, does so. It takes Kate a while to overcome her longings for home and to become accustomed to the new luxury and leisure. Even marriage to Dick and her own success on the stage do not satisfy her, however. She imagines that with her own home and fireside, life would be more fulfilling and seem more permanent. Kate becomes petulant and jealous of her husband's attention to his career. Like Gervaise, Kate has enjoyed a period of prosperity.

But then economic conditions bring hard times to the actors, and the troupe must break up.

Kate and Dick soon find themselves lying to their landlady about the rent, and disaster seems imminent. The only bright light on the horizon is the prospect that their infant daughter will bind them more closely together. But this is not to be. Alcohol has flowed freely among the actors, and Kate has already acquired the habit of overindulgence. The doctor prescribes brandy to ease the nerves of the new mother, and Kate begins to drink in earnest, first secretly, then openly. She neglects the baby, and the baby dies. Guilt and the conviction of well-founded jealousy lead Kate into uncontrollable drinking. There are realistic scenes of domestic violence with Kate brandishing a firepoker and Dick fending off the blows with a chair. Kate becomes inebriated and interrupts performances to denounce her husband before his audience.

Kate recognizes the severity of her problem and fears that she is going mad, or that she will awaken some morning to find herself a murderess. In occasional moments of repentant sobriety she wins the reader's sympathy. Never does the reader become disgusted with her, for he understands the processes of her mind and that her condition is the result of her belief in Dick's unfaithfulness and her own tendency to dissatisfaction. Her instincts and her illusions are her reality.

Finally, unable to secure his wife's committal to an asylum, Lennox provides for her physical needs and leaves her. In

this novel, as in real life, the suffering of one marriage partner has an ennobling effect on the other. Whereas Coupeau becomes through an accident the cause of his wife's downfall, Kate's suffering seems to bring out the best in Dick Lennox. He becomes a nobler man than he promises to be when he is introduced in the novel. He is a faithful husband who patiently endures the alcoholic ragings of his wife, although he does not fully understand her. Near the end of the novel he forms an intellectual and spiritual relationship with a superior woman, Mrs. Laura Forest. The spiritual and moral ennoblement of Dick Lennox is certainly an anti-naturalistic feature in the novel.

Not only does Moore achieve a variety among his characters, he also portrays each one as a complex individual with more than one side to his personality. Kate's chagrin at being made a party to theft when Dick stuffs unpaid-for cakes into her pockets at a restaurant is interesting. It is stated that her capitulation to sexual immorality was one thing, but being made dishonest was quite another. One of the most psychologically subtle scenes occurs when Kate, having met Lennox and felt new sensations awakened in herself, is going through a trunk of souvenirs from her girlhood. The books, verses, trinkets, and other remembrances of childhood dreams now take on a new meaning for her, and she experiences a feeling of guilt and fear of detection as she luxuriates in old memories and renewed dreams. Susan Mitchell praises the creation of Dick Lennox, writing, "The fat actor who lures away the poor little woman who becomes

his wife lives in my memory as one of the most real human beings in English fiction."²⁴ The transformation of Lennox from easy-going man of the world to responsible and loving husband and spiritual being is a commendable accomplishment. A psychologist of lesser gifts than Moore might have made him an effete, raffish man who attracts the heroine and then abandons her by degrees.

The Zolaist was not to begin with a plot. Miller describes the process: "He [the novelist] must trace the chain of causation: each step in the action must proceed logically from previous conditions. Human sentiment, triumph, fate shall appear as inevitable workings out of the laws of biology."²⁵

Thus the drunken vomiting of Coupeau drives Gervaise to Lantier's bed, the outcome of which is not only the further debasement of Gervaise, but also the development of the sexual prowess of the pubescent Nana. The bitterness Coupeau feels after his nearly fatal accident leads him to drink during his recuperation. Coupeau's constant inebriation and his consequent failure to return to work have an understandable effect on Gervaise. Unable to sustain the family morally and financially, she capitulates, working irregularly and taking to drink herself. The structure of L' Assommoir can be compared to the growth of a tree, the seed of which is pernicious poverty. The exigencies of poverty determine the growth of branches and

²⁴ Susan Mitchell, George Moore (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 44

²⁵ Moore, A Mummer's Wife, ed. Walter J. Miller, p. vi.

twigs, the events of the story.

In A Mummer's Wife the structure is much leaner with fewer pivotal events. Kate's flight with Lennox, the breaking up of the actors' company, the birth of the baby, and Kate's death are the only events essential to the story. Since there are so few "branches" and "twigs" in the novel, it is certain that Moore had a skeleton of a plot in mind when he began writing. Coincidental circumstances are few, and the significant developments in the story are chiefly in the mind of the heroine. Moore explores these in convincingly effective detail. Although it is not possible to state that A Mummer's Wife is not a naturalistic novel, one must concede that Moore's work contains significant departures from naturalism. Among these are the importance of mental processes as opposed to external events, the presentation of Kate Ede as an isolated individual rather than as a type of humanity, the relative unimportance of heredity and environment, and the ennoblement of one of the chief characters.

Susan Mitchell was living with the Yeats when she read A Mummer's Wife

chiefly with feminine perversity, because W.B. Yeats had forbidden his sisters to read it. I gulped guilty pages of it as I went to bed of nights. Its merciless probing into life intimidated me....I was impaled on the point of it....I understand that the book is regarded as immoral; to me it appeared one of the most gloomy moralities in literature.²⁶

The modern reader would certainly agree with Miss Mitchell. The reader of great moral sensitivity should not have failed to be

²⁶ Mitchell, pp. 43-44.

reassured that "the wages of sin is death."

But the staid Victorian epitomized by the circulating libraries of Mudie and Smith, which bought up and rented out the expensive three-volume editions of whatever books they deemed acceptable and thus held a monopoly, was not impressed by the obvious moral and the vivid picture of the evils of alcohol. Mudie claimed to be appalled instead by the frank treatment of adultery, referring specifically to a scene in which Lennox pulls Kate into a room and closes the door. (Nothing happens in the room.) Actually the danger perceived by Mudie was more to his own monopoly than to public morals, for A Mummer's Wife had been published in a cheap one-volume edition that the reader could afford to buy himself.

Mudie had bought fifty three-volume copies of A Modern Lover when it appeared in 1883 but had refused to circulate them after two ladies objected to the scene in which Gwynnie Lloyd posed in the nude for the painter Lewis Seymour. Zola had then suggested the inexpensive one-volume edition to Moore for his next book. Moore had appealed to Henry Vizetelly, publisher of foreign works in translation, to publish his A Mummer's Wife. The result was that while the novel was banned by the circulating libraries, it met with moderate success in English bookshops. A Mummer's Wife was praised as something new in English realism by reviewers in The Athenaeum, The Graphic, the Pall Mall Gazette, The Academy, and the Spectator, none of whom

found the book morally objectionable.²⁷

George Moore attacked the circulating libraries in two articles. The first, entitled "A New Censorship of Literature," appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette on December 10, 1884, and charged the libraries with exercising censorship over publishers, writers, and readers. He correctly pointed out that romantic and sentimental novels were more likely to exert a malign influence on young minds than were novels that merely observed reality. He tells Mr. X-- (Charles Edward Mudie) that next time he will take his product directly to the public in a cheap form.²⁸

Moore's second polemic effort was a short pamphlet entitled "Literature at Nurse or Circulating Morals," which was published in the summer of 1885 after the circulating libraries had banned A Mummer's Wife. He pointed out the critical success of the novel and to the fact that it was then in its fourth edition. He reprinted the innocuous passage to which Mudie had objected along with three more daring scenes from novels by other authors which had not been suppressed. Moore wrote:

But although I am willing to laugh at you, Mr. Mudie, to speak candidly, I hate you; and I love and am proud of my hate of you. It is the best thing about me. I hate you because you dare question the sacred right of the artist to obey the impulses of his temperament; I hate you because you are the great purveyor

²⁷ George Moore, Literature at Nurse or Circulating Morals, ed. J. Fletcher, et al. (New York: Garland Pub., 1976), p. 23.

²⁸ Moore, A Mummer's Wife, ed. Walter J. Miller, p. ix.

of the worthless, the false and the commonplace; I hate you because you are a fetter about the ankles of those who would press forward towards the light of truth; I hate you because you feel not the spirit of scientific inquiry that is bearing our age along; I hate you because you pander to the intellectual sloth of today; I hate you because you would mould all ideas to fit the narrow limits in which your own turn; I hate you because you impede the free development of our literature.²⁹

Literature was not to be kept from progressing, said George Moore, simply because a mere tradesman was in league with the British mama to keep her unmarried daughter ignorant of life.

Though both L' Assommoir and A Mummer's Wife are naturalistic novels, they are as unlike as were their authors. As we have seen, Zola had known poverty himself and wrote out of a sincere indignation at the lot of the poor. His technique and intent are comparable to those of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, whose aim was to present his audience with an objective view of a social problem through Entfernung or Distanzierung. That is, the viewer or the reader was to be shown the problem in such a way that it had an intellectual but not an emotional impact on him. The audience was not to be moved to pity Mother Courage for all of her sorrows but to condemn those who profited from war.

Brecht used art to promote his socialist views. Zola became a socialist in the course of his documentation of social evils that plagued the Second Empire and the Third Republic. Today Zola is remembered as much for J' Accuse and his efforts

²⁹ Moore, Literature at Nurse or Circulating Morals, pp. 16-17.

in behalf of Alfred Dreyfus as for Germinal and L' Assommoir.

No such political views or social concerns moved George Moore. His letters and autobiographical writings reveal that he was disgusted with the Boer War and had little hope for the success of home rule in Ireland. But his irritation at not being able to go out to get a book bound because of German bombardment of London in 1914 is more typical of Moore. Have-lock Ellis tells how at the time when Moore was working on Esther Waters the man of letters stopped him on the street to tell him "with tender human sympathies" that young mothers in London were being forced to give up their illegitimate babies to destruction.³⁰ Moore loved to tell people that his novel had led to legal action against baby farms and to philanthropic endowment of homes for unwed mothers.³¹ These results were neither anticipated nor intended. George Moore was primarily an artist who happened to choose social problems as his métier and never a social activist.

In Confessions of a Young Man he wrote:

Oh, for excess, for crime! I would give many lives to save one sonnet by Baudelaire; for the hymn, 'À la très-chère, a la très-belle, qui remplit mon coeur de clarté,' let the first-born in every house in Europe be slain; and in all sincerity I profess my readiness to decapitate all the Japanese in Japan and elsewhere, to save from destruction one drawing by Hokusai. Again I say that all we deem sublime in the world's history are acts of injustice; and it is

³⁰ Malcolm Brown, George Moore: A Reconsideration (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1955), p. 128.

³¹ Brown, p. 124.

certain that if mankind does not relinquish at once, and forever its vain, mad and fatal dream of justice, the world will lapse into barbarism. England was great and glorious because England was unjust, and England's greatest son was the personification of injustice--Cromwell.³²

Certainly this was either an exaggeration intended to shock, or it was penned by Amico Moorini, the mediocre writer in Moore, to whom he attributed his failures and puerilities. Nevertheless it is an accurate expression of Moore's priorities. While George Moore the Irish landlord was seemingly kinder than other landlords of the Protestant Ascendancy in that he did not summarily evict tenants who refused to pay their rents in full, his observation of the poor in Ireland inspired him to write:

Humanity be hanged! Men of inferior genius, Victor Hugo and Mr. Gladstone, take refuge in it. Humanity is a pig-sty, where liars, hypocrites and the obscene in spirit congregate; it has been so since the great Jew conceived it, and it will be so till the end. Far better the blithe modern pagan in his white tie and evening clothes, and his facile philosophy. He says, 'I don't care how the poor live; my only regret is that they live at all,' and he gives the beggar a shilling.³³

In February, 1884, Moore wrote to his mother regarding A Mummer's Wife, "I think that I shall this time knock l'ecole sentimentale head over heels."³⁴ Moore hoped to create a novel

³² Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 125.

³³ Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 186.

³⁴ Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 102.

that would be exceptional for its art and its shock value. Zola too intended to shock, but art was more a tool for social reform than an aesthetic expression to him.

It was inevitable that the limited light of naturalism would burn itself out in time. Matthew Josephson documents the demise of Zolaism as follows:

For a quarter of a century Emile Zola had towered like a big tree over the life of France. A whole generation had grown up with this vast book of twenty volumes and twelve hundred characters. Millions had read in it. Its completion in June, 1893, appeared a colossal achievement, one of the most constructive of the century....Now that it was done, the whole nation applauded him; now that the Naturalists were as a triumphant army, the age prepared to move away from Zola, in other directions.³⁵

Flaubert had foreseen where naturalism would lead and had repudiated the social novel soon after he had discovered it for himself. He said to his niece, "Cursed be the day that I had the fatal idea of writing Madame Bovary."³⁶ Huysmans declared his revulsion for the unmitigated materialism of Zola and became a convert to Roman Catholicism. In France the mysticism of Mallarmé and the Symbolists grew out of a reaction to science.

George Moore had written the first naturalistic novel in English, A Mummer's Wife, but naturalism never really caught on in England. Henry James had praised the courage and objec-

³⁵ Josephson, p. 354.

³⁶ As quoted in Josephson, p. 267.

tivity of Zola, but only George Moore had written a successful naturalistic novel. Henry Vizetelly was prosecuted from 1884 on for publishing Zola's Rougon-Macquart novels, and in 1888 he was finally imprisoned for having published La Terre, a novel which shows the peasants' principal interest in life to be copulating and producing more and more peasants.

George Moore's infatuation with naturalism was short-lived. He found he could not keep up with Zola, who worked up a new subject every year--war, coal mines, rural population explosion, alcoholism, and prostitution. Moore said that three naturalistic novels were all the nervous system could tolerate.³⁷ His friendship with Zola ended when Confessions of a Young Man appeared in 1888 with some criticism of certain passages in Zola's novels. The two had never been intimate friends, according to Zola's widow, who said that they had merely agreed to promote each other's work, each in his own country.³⁸

The following passage from Confessions of a Young Man is indicative of Moore's disaffection from Zola and suggests that Moore had never been a whole-hearted disciple of the master of Medan:

What I reproach Zola with is that he has no style; there is nothing you won't find in Zola from Chateaubriand to the reporting in the Figaro. He seeks immortality in an exact description of a linen-draper's shop;

³⁷ Brown, p. 99.

³⁸ Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 143.

if the shop conferred immortality it should be upon the linen-draper who created the shop, and not on the novelist who described it.³⁹

Zola reportedly replied, "Children devour their parents, it is the law of nature."⁴⁰

After the publication of Parnell and His Island in 1887 George Moore wrote no book directly inspired by Zola, although, as we shall see, Esther Waters (1894) could never have been written had Moore not discovered le naturalisme, la vérité, la science.

The demise of naturalism in Germany was heralded by the appearance of Gerhardt Hauptmann's Hanneles Himmelfahrt in 1893. In this drama, the young heroine, dying after brutal beatings by her father, has wondrous, mystical visions of the hereafter. Hauptmann's Die Versunkene Glocke (1896) was a heavily symbolic drama with no evidence of naturalism. In the United States naturalism endured much longer in the works of Theodore Dreiser, who continued writing in the vein of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris.

³⁹ Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 110.

⁴⁰ Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 143.

Chapter III

Moore's Use of Realism in A Drama in Muslin, Parnell and His Island, and Esther Waters

Zola had suggested to Moore that he write a naturalistic novel on Ireland, "a social novel, truthful, audacious, revolutionary."¹ A conversation with a lady who remarked about the lives and emotions of Irish girls during the successes and failures of the Dublin Season supplied him with his theme. He would write about the marriage market of the Irish gentry. Moore spent the winter of 1883-1884 at Moore Hall in County Mayo and in Dublin at the Shelbourne Hotel, where most of the Irish debutantes stayed. He went to drawing-rooms and dances and circulated among the eligibles, the young ladies, and their chaperons. In addition to his own notes, taken in true naturalistic style, he solicited comments on Irish life from his brother Julian.

A Drama in Muslin, subtitled "a realistic novel," was published in 1886. It traces the fortunes of several girls through two Dublin Seasons following their graduation from a Catholic convent school. A. Norman Jeffares points out that the choice of an exceptional girl as heroine was a significant

¹ Brown, p. 102.

departure from Zola.² Alice Barton is an intellectual, agnostic, sensitive, and kind-hearted young woman. She stands midway between her beautiful but feather-brained sister Olive and her friend, the fanatically religious hunchback, Cecilia Cullen, who is repulsed by the very thought of women, who are pure, having any dealings with men, who are, for her, vulgar animals.

Mrs. Barton prepares the beautiful Olive for her first Season. Dresses and "hunting tactics"--for the eligible men are regarded as quarry--are selected with care. Mrs. Barton interferes in Olive's affair with the unmoneyed Captain Hibbert because she wishes her daughter to aim higher, at Lord Kilcarney, a roué, but a titled roué. Mrs. Barton's aggressive invitations and proposal in behalf of her daughter drive Lord Kilcarney right into the arms of one of Olive's rivals.

Poor, plain Alice can expect but little success in Dublin, and after Olive is safely married, Mrs. Barton plans to marry off her troublesome older daughter to the dissipated Sir Charles. In order to do this, however, she will have to see to it that the latter's numerous illegitimate children are emigrated. In Dublin Alice meets a cynical young writer, John Hardinge, who inspires her to a life of thought and writing.

After the debacle of the first Dublin Season, Mrs. Barton

² A. Norman Jeffares, "A Drama in Muslin," in George Moore's Mind and Art, ed. Graham Owens (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968), p. 7.

and Olive plan for the next. This time the matrimonial interests of all the young ladies are centered on a debauched young English lord and a gouty old Irish distiller. Again Mrs. Barton arms herself but fails to win either one for Olive, who then despairs and plans to elope with Captain Hibbert. She sprains her ankle and contracts pneumonia after lying out-of-doors in the cold dampness all night. Alice nurses her sister back to health and falls in love with Dr. Reed, the physician in attendance at the sickbed. At the end of the novel we see Alice living happily with her husband and children in a big house in England. Bored and still unmarried, Olive comes to live with her sister.

Evidence of naturalism is found chiefly in Moore's method of observation, in certain descriptive passages, and in several overt statements by the author. Moore is unrelentingly factual in his description of Mrs. Barton and her strategy for conquest in the marriage market. The scheming woman tells her daughter Olive how much champagne to drink and what to say to the young men. She even instructs Olive's maid, Barnes, to talk only of titled men so that Olive will forget the good-natured but impoverished Captain Hibbert and begin to think favorably of Lord Kilcarney. Mrs. Barton and Mrs. Gould discuss the assets of the eligible young men as if the latter were pieces of merchandize. Mrs. Barton's mind is nothing more than a calculating instrument. She is incapable of tender feelings toward her daughters.

Environment and heredity are significant in A Drama in Muslin. Olive and May Gould are both products and victims of a social milieu dominated by the empty standards of the Irish aristocracy. Social prestige and money are acquired through marriage. The Irish upper class does not value such qualities as love, honor, or self-sacrifice. But, not all can succeed in a competitive society where the aspirants are many and the prizes few. May has an illegitimate child by a would-be suitor. Olive, though she has inherited the stunning good looks of her father, also fails. Her defeat is largely the result of the shameless, aggressive scheming of her mother, which frightens the quarry away. Moore makes a further statement on Olive's heredity, extending its significance beyond that of family and late nineteenth-century Ireland. Of Olive he writes, "It was the mild and timid loveliness that is the fruit of eighteen hundred years of Christianity."³ What Moore means by this is not clear. It is a lone statement that remains undeveloped by other material in the novel. He obviously means to attribute Olive's personality to something more than Anglo-Irish Catholicism, but there is no further indictment of Christianity in the novel.

The crippled, homely Cecilia Cullen is an interesting victim of heredity. In a society that values physical charms as a means to social success, it is no wonder that the ugly

³ George Moore, A Drama in Muslin (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1886), p. 4.

little hunchback should become an eccentric, embittered and unhappy recluse with lesbian tendencies. Moore states that Cecilia's dark and illogical mind is the result of her father's advanced age at the time of her birth and of her mother's loathing of her husband during conception, pregnancy, and birth.

Alice Barton is also to some extent the product of heredity and social milieu. She has inherited her mother's logical mind and her grandfather's love of things intellectual. From her handsome, effete, and impractical father she has inherited nothing. It is not surprising that an intelligent but physically unalluring girl should develop her only assets--her mind and her character. Alice's intelligence and education set her off from her family and the young people who are so typical of their society. Her highly developed intellect enables her to see through the empty values of her class. Her conscience and character develop as a result of her unique insight, and she becomes a warm, loving young woman who separates herself emotionally and intellectually from her vapid milieu. Alice comes to see something wrong in a big house being kept in luxury and sloth by hundreds of peasants living and suffering in many little hovels round about it. Moore writes of Alice: "In every nature there is a dominating force, which decides victory or defeat on all occasions. In Alice this took the form of supreme unselfishness."⁴ This statement is reminiscent of

⁴ Moore, A Drama in Muslin, p. 60.

Moore's portrayal of Kate Ede, who was also possessed by a dominating force, dissatisfaction, which led her through many small defeats to her final destruction.

Alice Barton does not succeed in terms of the values of her own class. Her solution to the problem of Ireland is that of many of the characters in Moore's collection of short stories, The Untilled Field. She emigrates to escape a way of life that has become repugnant to her.

In addition to the characters already mentioned, Moore creates a number of interesting minor characters. Lord Duncory, who is constantly at the side of Mrs. Barton, has never achieved anything in life. All he is capable of doing is uttering platitudinous bits of flattery and advice in French. His younger daughter, Cecilia, and his two much older daughters, the ladies Cullen, are all failures in the marriage market society. Only in the Barton household is he valued.

Mr. Barton is an equally ridiculous figure. This artist manqué who spends his hours painting foolish scenes from history and mythology is ignored by his family and cannot manage his estate effectively.

Fred Scully is typical of the Irish eligibles. He is gross, idle, and selfish by nature, loving only pleasure, which for him means horses, women, and food. Sir Charles, another eligible, is known chiefly as the father of many illegitimate children. The promiscuous Mrs. Lawler, the kindly Dr. Reed, and the detached scholar, Mr. Hardinge, who appears in a number of Moore's works, complete the varied cast of

minor characters.

Moore juxtaposes the ludicrous and the painfully real in A Drama in Muslin. The spinsters Jane and Sarah Cullen are busy converting Catholic peasants to Protestantism, while their younger sister, Cecilia, goes about with a scapular about her neck, a rosary at her waist, and a medal blessed by the Pope in her hand. The resultant religious warfare among the sisters drives Lord Dungory from the house. Mr. Barton innocently paints a picture of a mythological scene, in which two of the female characters resemble Olive and her mother--in the nude. The two women are scandalized and take to their rooms in tears.

Next to these ridiculous activities of the upper class Moore places the reality of misery and hardship of the Irish peasantry. The peasants stand around in ominous watchfulness, with Land League violence looming darkly behind the glittering social scenes and the frivolity. Ragged peasants stare through the windows at the finery of the guests at the spinsters' ball. The debutantes are described at worship with peasants coughing and clearing their throats behind them. When saliva hits the floor, the young ladies look at one another with unspeakable disgust.

Moore describes with naturalistic detail the scene at the castle as the carriages arrive for the festivities:

Notwithstanding the terrible weather the streets were lined with vagrants, patriots, waifs, idlers of all sorts and kinds. Plenty of girls of sixteen came out to see the 'finery.' Poor little things in battered bonnets and draggled skirts, who would dream upon ten shillings a week; a drunken mother

striving to hush a child that dies beneath a dripping shawl; a harlot embittered by feelings of commercial resentment; troops of labourers battered and bruised with toil: you see their hang-dog faces, their coats, their shirts torn and revealing the beast-like hair on their chests....⁵

Perhaps the most Zolaesque description is that of Olive on her sickbed. In this scene Moore strikes a blow at the empty-minded, luxury-centered Irish aristocracy, in that he allows ugly sickness to humiliate the beautiful flower and symbol of that class. He writes, "The beautiful eyes were now turgid and dull, the lids hung heavily over a line of filmy blue, and a thick, scaly layer of bloody tenacious mucous persistently accumulated and covered the tiny and once jewel-like teeth."⁶

While the methods of clinical observation are naturalistic, and certain passages are purely Zolaesque, Moore attempts much more than naturalism in this novel. A number of descriptions of the beauties of nature, not seen before in Moore, seem to anticipate Pater, but amount to nothing but purple patches that seem incongruous with the pictures of a suffering peasantry and a loathsome aristocracy. There are a number of obtrusive comments by the author, in which he expatiates unnecessarily on character. Not satisfied with portraying Mrs. Barton as a hypocritical woman through conversation and behavior alone, Moore

⁵ Moore, A Drama in Muslin, p. 111.

⁶ Moore, A Drama in Muslin, p. 295.

adds the authorial observation that "there was about Mrs. Barton's whole person an air of falseness, as indescribable as it was bewitching."⁷ He writes of Alice's plight: "And from this awful mummery in muslin there was no escape. It would continue until the remedy became tragedy....She with a plain face is like a seed fallen upon a rock."⁸ The book is an odd work characterized by naturalism, experimentation, and frequent personal intrusions by George Moore himself.

When A Drama in Muslin appeared in 1886 it was regarded as scandalous. It is true that there are a few naughty scenes in the book, such as that in which Captain Hibbert mentally undresses the young women in the ballroom. There is also the girls' audacious talk of their chamois drawers. But readers did not object to these episodes, nor to the incidents of illegitimacy, nor to Alice Barton's agnosticism. The scandal lay in the fact that the novel was thought to be a roman à clef. Both the critics and the public preferred Kate Ede to Alice Barton. Moore's biographer, Joseph Hone, writes of the novel, "The style--or rather styles--of A Drama in Muslin represented an attempt to escape from the plainness and literalism of A Mummer's Wife, just as Alice Barton and Cecilia Cullen were an attempt to render more spiritual and more complex natures than

⁷ Moore, A Drama in Muslin, p. 23.

⁸ Moore, A Drama in Muslin, p. 99.

those among which Zola had met with his greatest successes."⁹

Parnell and His Island, published in 1887, is not quite fiction nor quite a sociological document. In spite of the title, Charles Stewart Parnell, the champion of Irish nationalism and Home Rule, plays no role in the work. Parnell and His Island can be read as an adjunct to A Drama in Muslin, for both works present the Catholic peasantry and the landlord class of Ireland at their worst. Here Moore is more explicit about the spiritual and physical degradation of the peasantry than he is in the novel:

And in these dens a whole family, a family consisting of husband and wife, grandfather and grandmother and from eight to ten children herd together as best they can. The cabins are thatched or are roofed with green sods cut from the nearest field. About each doorway there is a dung-heap in which pigs wallow in the wettest and children play on the driest part....A large pig, covered with lice, feeds out of a trough placed in the middle of the floor, and the beast from time to time approaches and sniffs at the child sleeping in a cot by the fireside. The old grandmother waves her palsied hands and the beast retires to his trough.¹⁰

This passage with its almost documentary objectivity portrays a human society that lives on equal terms with the most disgusting of quadrupeds. The animality of the peasants is suggested in other passages as well; for example, a peasant in a torn shirt and "looking like a wild beast" is seen climbing

⁹ Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 119.

¹⁰ George Moore, Parnell and His Island (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887), pp. 46-47.

out of a boghole. The association of humanity with the soil is hardly an idyllic one. The peasant typically is superstitious and blindly obedient to the village priest. Rarely is the village priest the representative of true Christian ideals, and even when he is, he must deal with a people sunk to a sub-human level of existence. One priest promotes early marriage to prevent sin, for he knows that the young Irish peasants are constantly in rut.

Moore does not spare the landlord in his picture of a hopelessly decayed Ireland. The peasant eats yellow meal and watery potatoes in order that the landlord, an idle parasite, may have chicken and champagne. A landlord is pictured drawing from his pocket a roll of banknotes that smell of cabin smoke and greasy peasant sweat to pay for a new dress for his daughter to wear to a tennis party. The landlord finds peasant women delightfully promiscuous, and illegitimacy is rampant.

Parnell and His Island is a curious work that suggests a state of confusion in its author's mind. There are lengthy passages extolling the natural beauties of Ireland and whole pages of Zolaesque descriptions of an ugly, animal-like peasantry. A quotation from Balzac in French and a number of references to Verlaine and Baudelaire obtrude in the text. The descriptions of nature and the allusions to French culture do not serve to make the Irish people even uglier and more despicable. They merely portray the hauteur of the author. The book is a picture of a beautiful land peopled by barbarians

whom Anglo-Saxon culture had been unable to civilize in seven hundred years--painted by an unsympathetic emigree.

In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore describes "awful Emma," a charwoman who cleaned the rooms in the Strand that he had taken after he left Paris:

And I used to ask you all sorts of cruel questions, I was curious to know the depth of animalism you had sunk to, or rather out of which you had never been raised. And you generally answered innocently and naively enough. But sometimes my words were too crude, and they struck through the thick hide into the quick, into the human, and you winced a little; but this was rarely, for you were very nearly an animal: your temperament and intelligence was just that of a dog....Dickens would sentimentalize or laugh over you; I do neither. I merely recognize you as one of the facts of civilization.¹¹

In 1894, after writing four novels that had failed (A Mere Accident, 1887; Spring Days, 1888; Mike Fletcher, 1889; and Vain Fortune, 1891), Moore abandoned the ruined upper-class artists and bohemians of his failures and returned to "awful Emma." Instead of the patrician subject favored by the aesthete (Moore had been writing under the influence of Pater), he chose a lowly servant girl.

Esther Waters is not, however, the naturalistic novel that Moore might have created had he written it earlier. When it was published in 1894 some reviewers hailed the novel as naturalistic because it dealt with poverty and the struggles of a servant girl. Seduction is indeed a favorite naturalistic

¹¹ Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, pp. 133-134.

theme. The reviewers ignored the fact that Esther Waters contains none of the determinism and pessimism of naturalism. Esther does not succumb to forces of heredity and environment that she cannot understand or over which she has no power. She does not exactly prosper, but she survives comfortably.

Poor, illiterate Esther Waters leaves an unhappy home where she is not wanted, to become a servant at Woodview, an English estate where horseracing is the only real concern in life. She falls victim to the amorous attentions of William Latch, a footman and the son of the cook. After her seduction Esther recoils from any further attentions from her lover, and he elopes with a well-to-do girl. Esther has been happy at Woodview, for in spite of having to endure much teasing over her Dissenting religious beliefs, she finds friendship with her co-religionist and mistress, Mrs. Barfield. When her pregnancy becomes noticeable, she must leave Woodview. After a brief sojourn at home, where she is not welcome, she gives birth to a son in a charitable hospital.

Esther secures employment as a wet nurse but realizes that her son Jackey is likely to die at the baby farm where he must stay. Barely avoiding the workhouse, Esther works in a number of situations as a general servant. She slaves seventeen hours a day to support herself and Jackey. After six years of toil and with the promise of marriage to a kindly Dissenting preacher, Fred Parsons, she meets William Latch again. Because of old feelings of affection and the conviction that it would be

the best thing to do, she marries Latch.

Until Jackey is almost a man she lives in relative comfort, supported by Latch's illegal gambling enterprise. William's ill health and arrest put an end to this, however, and Esther returns to Mrs. Barfield. Jackey visits her in the uniform of a soldier, and the novel ends.

Though this is not a sketch of a naturalistic novel, its realism could not have been conceived without Zola. Moore documents the horseracing background and the servants' world from his knowledge of both as a child at Moore Hall. He does so with realism and attention to detail. The descriptions of general elation over a winning horse and the accounts of petty jealousies among the servants are well executed. The author is not as scientifically detached as he was in A Mummer's Wife or A Drama in Muslin. He cautiously shows sympathy for Esther in her struggles, but there are no Victorian sermons or chats with the reader. Moore shares with Fred Parsons a concern over the evils of gambling--suicide, bankruptcy, drunkenness, prostitution, and broken homes, but this concern is not the central issue in the novel.

Esther's heredity and childhood environment are delineated with detail. Her stepfather is a drunkard who tyrannizes his family with violence and threats of violence. Her mother is a long-suffering Christian, a woman worn with care who starves herself in order that her selfish, gluttonous husband might have more to eat. But Esther inherits nothing

from either parent. She is not selfish and crude like her stepfather nor weak-willed and vacillating like her mother. Moore's description of Esther's childhood environment is reminiscent of Zola's treatment of Père Bijard and his cruelty to little Lalie. But Moore shows that it is precisely because of the patience she had learned and the religious convictions she had acquired as a child that Esther survives.

The characters are drawn in a way that conforms to real life. Esther, for example, is no haloed saint. After the seduction, her temper drives William away. Had she not threatened him with a knife and shunned him, certainly William, who genuinely loved Esther, would have set things right between them. Moore has Esther buy a sweepstakes ticket, not a thing for a Dissenting Christian girl to do. Esther enjoys herself at the ball but feels afterwards that the dancing, drinking, and furtive kissing in the arbors were wicked. After her seduction Esther states that she had not really known what she was doing. Attributing her behavior to the unwise decision to take a second glass of wine, she compares her state of mind on the occasion to that of a sleepwalker. This explanation is perfectly believable, and it makes of Esther the victim of unfortunate circumstances and not of overwhelming forces of evil. Esther is very humanly jealous of the pretty and rich Peggy, with whom William falls in love after Esther's rebuff. Gambling ultimately destroys William Latch, Sarah Tucker, and the Randals, but ironically Esther survives in spite of it

and even because of it. She is able to send Jackey to school, and she has a servant and good food.

William Latch is an amiable young man whom most girls would find attractive. He really loves Esther and does not unscrupulously take advantage of her. After their intercourse he does not wish to end the relationship, but Esther's behavior forces him to do just that. As soon as he is aware of Jackey's existence, he wishes to be a good father to the lad, but his attentions merely make Esther jealous. William's only real defect is that he makes a living through illegal gambling.

After Esther leaves the lying-in hospital, she meets many people, many of whom are hard, self-righteous, and uncaring, but some of whom are kind to Esther. Mrs. Spires of the baby farm is an unattractive person who does not care about the infants in her charge. Esther's employers, the Trubners, consider her an unregenerate sinner and not a desirable person to have around, and they release her after learning of her illegitimate child. Another employer, Miss Rice, a single woman and a writer, is kind to Esther, listening with sympathy to Esther's story and offering her helpful advice. Fred Parsons, the Dissenting preacher, knows of Esther's misfortune, but he still loves her and wishes to marry her. All in all, the characters in Esther Waters are a believable sample of humanity--some good, some not so good.

Perhaps the novel was taken to be naturalistic because of an admittedly curious statement at the end to the effect that Jackey, who appears at Woodfield in the red uniform of a soldier,

has grown up possibly to become cannon fodder. Herbert Howarth states that the final chapters of the novel are full of decay and pessimism, and he writes, "The story of Esther Waters is, in fact, a story of pointless courage and devotion."¹² But Moore did not intend a nihilistic message. He is not suggesting that Esther's long struggle has been in vain. Rather, he is stating that in that moment of happiness past struggle and unknown future are not considerations. Of Esther he says, "She was only conscious that she had accomplished her woman's work--she had brought him up to man's estate; and that was her sufficient reward."¹³ The novel ends where it began. Esther is back at Woodfield, and she has survived a battle in which many others have perished.

The critics saw many things in Esther Waters and still do not agree as to what it was that Moore accomplished in the novel. Frederick W. Seinfelt, who has studied relationships between men and women in Moore's novels, states that this work is primarily the story of the fortitude of women and notes that women suffer from the weakness of men. He adds the observation that Esther is able to form good relationships with other women in the story--with her mother, Mrs. Barfield, Miss Rice, Mrs.

¹² Herbert Howarth, The Irish Writers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p. 47.

¹³ George Moore, Esther Waters (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1942), p. 441

Latch, and Sarah Tucker.¹⁴

A major point of controversy has been the question of what influences are predominant in the novel. Moore had given it the subtitle "An English Novel." Immediately after its publication reviewers sought to demonstrate how very English Esther Waters was, pointing chiefly to matters of geography and personalities from whom Moore might have drawn his characters. Dunleavy has pointed out that the background of servant life and horseracing came entirely from Moore Hall, and that many of the characters were probably based on Irish friends and relatives of George Moore. Mrs. Barfield, she states, was most certainly Moore's own mother.¹⁵ Hence the novel is not English but Irish.

Graham Hough finds in Esther Waters a thoroughly French work. He notes that social studies in English novels tend to be either jocular or melodramatic. Moore's novel, he says, is neither. Instead, Moore observes "sober fidelity to the facts" and is closer to Flaubert than to Dickens or Fielding.¹⁶ Brian Nicholas agrees that Esther Waters is a very French novel, stating that Moore failed in the work, painting a very pallid heroine, simply because he did not fully abandon the ideas of

¹⁴ Frederick W. Seinfelt, Ireland's Unconventional Realist (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., 1975), p. 8.

¹⁵ Janet Egleson Dunleavy, The Artist's Vision, The Storyteller's Art (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1973), pp. 98-110.

¹⁶ Hough, p. 202.

Zola and Flaubert, which were no longer valid for him.¹⁷

The novel met with excellent critical and public reception. Over 24, 000 copies were sold in the first year. The reviewer "Q" of The Spectator placed it above Hardy's Tess of the D' Urbervilles.¹⁸ Smith's circulating library banned Esther Waters, probably because it had been written by George Moore, but purportedly because in it a Christian girl gives birth out of wedlock and because the childbirth scene was considered too realistic and detailed for print. The ban was raised after Gladstone, the Prime Minister, praised the novel.

¹⁷ Brian Nicholas, "The Case of Esther Waters," in Hughes, p. 176.

¹⁸ Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 199.

Chapter IV

George Moore and the English Realists

It has been noted that even in A Mummer's Wife, which most authorities consider a naturalistic novel, Moore made significant departures from Zola. Mental processes are emphasized over external events, and Kate Ede deteriorates because of her faulty perception of events touching her life, and not because of the events themselves. She does not represent a whole class of women; rather, she is an isolated example of what can happen in the life of a human being. She is the only character in the story who is destroyed. In A Drama in Muslin, as we have seen, Moore uses naturalistic description occasionally and makes environment and heredity the causes of intellectual and moral barrenness among the Irish nobility. But environment and heredity work together in the person of Alice Barton to release her from their chains. Olive Barton and other characters do not perish; they only endure the maintenance of the status quo. Esther Waters is naturalistic in technique and decor, but once again, an exceptional heroine is triumphant over her environment and heredity. Moore was not a slave to French naturalism. But the question of Moore's relation to the tradition of English realism remains.

When he wished to do so, the Victorian reader could

escape to the South Seas with Stevenson or to the distant outposts of the Empire with Kipling. But the demand for realism and conformity to real life in literature was greater than the demand for escapism. The popularity of serialized novels of a realist type in weekly and monthly publications attests to this. The Victorian reader wanted to be entertained, but he expected that the novels which entertained him would also conform to reality as he knew it. This reality meant social phenomena, moral problems, and questions of psychological interest.

The earliest English novels, those of Richardson and Smollett, contained realist elements. So did Austen's novels of manners. It is also true that the early Victorian novels, marked by strong interest in action and numerous episodes of love and adventure, combined romanticism and realism. One notable feature of mid-Victorian and late Victorian works is the increasing importance of psychological portrayal. This is one factor that separates the English realist tradition from French naturalism. In the latter, the events in the lives of the characters are paramount, for it is these events that determine the fate of the individual. In this respect, as we shall see, the works of George Moore are more English than they are French. Moore's novels will be compared to realist novels of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. Not only are these novelists the major novelists of the Victorian period, but they represent three different approaches to realism, and their works are representative of the writing of many other novelists of

their time. Dickens' works focus on social realities of the nineteenth century, and psychological development of characters is often of lesser importance than events. Eliot added psychological study to a preoccupation with social and moral problems. Under the influence of deterministic science, Hardy wrote forceful studies of people struggling against their physical and social environment.

George Moore and Charles Dickens were as unlike as two writers could be. Moore was the product of a rural life and made little progress in the limited formal education he received. Although Dickens had to forego a formal education, a fact about which he was always bitter, he was extremely well-read. Moore's biographers characterize him as a "dipper," one who sampled other writers' works, seldom reading a complete novel. Moore himself occasionally alludes to reading as a habit he had never really acquired. Charles Dickens grew up in London in the center of the bustling English industrial, business, and intellectual life. George Moore, having left the life of a country gentleman for the world of art and letters in Paris, had no practical experience in life. Charles Dickens, on the other hand, had worked in a blacking factory, in a law office, and as a reporter. While Dickens was a man of the people writing for the people, George Moore was essentially an outsider with what might be termed an uninformed disrespect for the English literary tradition.

The typical Dickens novel describes the tragedy, good fortune and adventure in the lives of the principal characters against a background which encompasses a number of social

groups. The various groups usually represent various levels of society which act upon one another in general ways and in specifics. Oliver Twist gives a complete picture of the workhouse, the underground, and genteel society, the three groups being brought together in the person of Oliver Twist. In Bleak House Esther Summerson is the principal character, in whose life the poverty-stricken, the professional class of the chancery, and the aristocracy meet.

Hard Times is an appropriate novel to compare with the novels of George Moore because it is typical of Dickens' social novels and yet is compact without all of the padding that Dickens generally used for his serialized novels. The story of Hard Times takes place against a backdrop that includes three social groups. First of all there is the world of the system, an industrial-educational complex dedicated to productivity, profit, figures, and facts. The pupils in Mr. Gradgrind's school are numbered, and they master the facts of numerous ologies. Gradgrind's pupils learn never to wonder or indulge in the imagination. Even taste is a matter of fact, and a floral design in a carpet is forbidden, for one does not tread on flowers in real life.

Dickens describes not only the world of the mind but also the physical world. The red brick buildings of "the ugly citadel" of Coketown have a monotonous sameness about them. Smoke curls up all day long, covering the town with a gray haze, and the river runs black. Mr. Gradgrind's home, Stone Lodge, is

severely symmetrical and cold and gray within and without. Bounderby's house is cheerless and comfortless but boastfully rich. The town is described as "a triumph of fact." Josiah Bounderby, Mrs. Sparsit, Bitzer, Mr. Gradgrind, and Mr. Mc-Choakumchild epitomize the arid life of the upper level of the industrial society.

The second world is that of the miserable hands, whose industry supports the luxury and idleness of the upper crust. Their lives are regulated by the factory bells which signal their swarming through the streets in the dark of the morning to their places at the machinery of Coketown and their return to their hovels at night. The steadfast Stephen Blackpool and his faithful Rachel represent hundreds of hands who are plagued by ignorance, alcoholism, illness, and other social ills.

In contrast to the aridness and misery of the two industrial worlds is the joy of the circus world. The objective industrial world clashes with the world of the imagination when young Tom and Louisa Gradgrind are scolded for peering at the circus through a hole in the fence. The circus people use a colorful slang and are loving and generous. The stories of dwarfs and fairies that Sissy Jupe reads to her father typify this world in which the imagination reigns supreme. A people whose occupation it is to make an audience happy are a people who care about others. Sissy, whose character was formed in this society brings joy and warmth to those people whose lives have been shaped by industry and fact.

Because environment is always highly charged and almost palpable in Dickens' novels, and one never finds a physical environment apart from man, characterization is both subservient to and essential to the creation of environment. Because Dickens exaggerated character to make his persona part of the greater reality of social background, one finds in his novels few characters that are completely believable as representatives of real human life. Esther Summerson is so impossibly good that the reader hardly believes her when she admits to having had selfish thoughts. Bill Sikes is a totally evil villain who thinks no kind thought and performs no kind deed. Harold Skimpole is completely ridiculous and impractical, a child in the body of an adult. Mr. Dombey is totally dour and unfeeling.

The characterization in Hard Times is typically extreme and caricatured. Sissy Jupe is loving and good, her only defect being her inability to master facts, which is really an asset in the context of the novel. Sissy, like Esther Summerson, Florence Dombey, and Mr. Brownlow, is one of Dickens' agents of good. Because of her character and her position in the novel she touches many lives and spreads good throughout the story. Because of her influence, the lives of Mr. Gradgrind, Louisa Gradgrind, and the three younger Gradgrinds are changed, no longer dominated by cold fact, but infused with warmth and love. Dickens typically rewards his favored characters, and in the case of Sissy Jupe, the reward is twofold:

the benevolence of Mr. Gradgrind and a happy marriage blessed with children.

Tom Gradgrind remains unredeemed from the evils of the system. He uses his sister Louisa shamelessly to gain what he wants in life, urging her to marry his employer, Bounderby, who is thirty years her senior, and whom she does not love, for his own benefit. Impressed by the incontrovertible "fact" that out of so many hundred people a certain number will necessarily be dishonest, Tom robs the Coketown bank, setting up the miserable Stephen Blackpool as a suspect. Both Tom and his sister have feelings of dissatisfaction with the system, but Tom attempts to escape only to have a little fun. This fun takes the form of gambling, which leads to indebtedness, robbery, and flight. Tom dies of a fever thousands of miles from home.

Louisa, also a product of the system, is described as "metallurgical." She, however, has a spark of good in her. This is her genuine love for her worthless brother. She marries Josiah Bounderby partly for her brother's benefit and partly because it is what she was brought up to do. When she finally experiences real love in a brief affair with James Harthouse, she flees, confused and wounded, to her father's home, where she is spiritually healed under the benign influence of Sissy Jupe. Mr. Gradgrind comes to see the errors of the system, and he and the three youngest Gradgrinds also benefit from the influence of Sissy.

Mr. Bounderby is the typical creature of the educational-industrial system. He never swerves from his pride at being a rich, self-made man. He lies about his origin, claiming to have been deserted in a gutter by his mother, whom he pays a stingy living to stay at a distance and not spoil the story he has created about himself. He does not love Louisa but marries her because he finds her to be a satisfactory product of the system and thus a fitting marriage partner. After his marriage he repeatedly refers to the high position he has conferred upon Louisa. His premature death from apoplexy on the streets of Coketown is a fitting end for the proud and hypocritical self-made man.

Bitzer is another typical product of the industrial society. Like Tom Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby, he is unredeemed from the evils of his environment. He advances through cunning and the misfortunes of others, first replacing Tom at the bank, and then presumably filling the shoes of Bounderby after the latter's decease. Bitzer is dominated by motives of ambition and hopes to benefit from Tom's misfortune by turning him in for robbery. Compassion is foreign to him, and he refuses to let Tom escape to Liverpool and America to avoid prosecution for theft. His designs are thwarted when he is restrained by the circus people.

Dickens' use of caricature is intensified by the presentation of character all at once. When a character is introduced, his physical and mental attributes are fully des-

cribed. For those characters not destined for salvation or good fortune, Dickens includes constant reminders of physical and mental characteristics, most of which are intended as defects. Thus Mrs. Sparsit is rarely mentioned without some reference to her Coriolanian facial features or her reduced station in life. Tom Gradgrind is constantly referred to as "the whelp." Stephen Blackpool repeatedly refers to his life as a "muddle." Bounderby always refers to himself as "Josiah Bounderby of Coketown." This device of repetition seems to anticipate the use of Wagnerian Leitmotif in the form of carious teeth, a prominent vein, blue eyes, dark eyes, or a buttonniere in the novels and novellas of Thomas Mann. With both authors the device has the anti-realistic effect of caricature. Both authors also gave caricatured names such as Gradgrind or McChoakumchild to many of their characters.

In Hard Times characterization contributes so much to environment that neither feature of the novel is independent of the other. Extreme characterizations of industrial coldness in Josiah Bounderby, abject poverty in Stephen Blackpool, and unsullied goodness in Sissy Jupe contribute greatly to the environment itself. In many cases Dickens' men and women are innocent or guilty victims of environment. This can be said of little Paul Dombey, Richard Carstone, Bitzer, and Tom Gradgrind. Evil is present in every novel of Dickens, but there are always some characters who survive this evil. Mr. Gradgrind, Louisa Gradgrind, Oliver Twist, Florence Dombey, Caddy

Jellyby, Pip, and others survive the evils of their milieu partly through their own resources and partly through the influence of other characters in the novels who are agents of good.

Hard Times, like the other novels of Dickens, is packed not only with many characters but also with events that influence the lives of these characters. In the novel one finds a schoolroom scene, desertion of a child by her father, two brief and unsuccessful romances, labor agitation, a robbery, a death, and several incidents of flight.

In spite of and even because of melodrama, sentimentalization, and caricature, the reader is brought face to face with several social realities in each of Dickens' novels. Through exaggeration Dickens creates in Hard Times a very real picture of the misery of poverty, the aridness of the life of the industrialists, the mind-killing educational system, and the richness of the life of the circus people.

Environment is not as powerful and pervasive in the realist novels of George Moore as in the novels of Dickens. There is no attempt to present the whole of society as an active agent in the fate of the individual as in Dickens' novels. Dickens' use of environment is comparable to that of Zola, except that in Zola's works, only the immediate social class plays a significant role in the fate of the characters, the upper classes being absent from his novels. In A Mummer's Wife neither the whole of society nor the immediate social class plays a role in the fate of Kate Ede. The environment

is restricted to two factors: a small industrial town and the life of traveling actors. The reader feels that Kate's decline is not so much the result of overwhelming forces of heredity and environment as of quirks in her personality that render her helpless against their minimal forces. The milieu of A Drama in Muslin is simply the aristocracy and the peasantry of Ireland. While Moore develops the environment much more fully in this novel, it is not a causative agent in the life of Alice Barton. The heroine is able to see through her social class because of her superior mentality and she simply emigrates. In neither novel does Moore describe physical surroundings, except for an occasional reference to Bible verses hanging on the wall, an actress' tights, or a young debutante's finery. The descriptions of nature in A Drama in Muslin are nothing more than indulgence in word-painting, for natural surroundings play no role in the story or in the lives of the characters. In Esther Waters the significant environment is that of the lower servant class and the horse racers. The upper class, although present in the novel, is not an active agent for good or evil. While some of Esther's upper-class employers are clearly despicable, Miss Rice, the writer for whom Esther works, is most admirable. Kate Ede perishes, Alice Barton escapes, and Esther Waters endures. In a sense Alice and Esther in their struggles in that neither becomes a victim of her environment, but in both cases success comes because of inner powers of character, and there are no agents of good to help them as in Dickens' novels.

While Dickens presents characters who are caricatured extremes and more or less finished psychological and social products to begin with, George Moore reveals his major characters gradually. Moore's characters are thus more complex and more true to life. A Mummer's Wife begins with Kate Ede living the normal, unexciting life of a young housewife. She sees a chance for romance and escape from ennui and leaves her dull but stable existence. Her deterioration is a gradual process, revealing the defects of her character slowly. The development of Alice Barton's conscience and personality spreads from the beginning to the end of A Drama in Muslin. Indeed, it is the chief matter of the novel. Dickens' Louisa Gradgrind is a mechanical young woman, and the change into a feeling human being that she undergoes takes place in a few pages. The personality of Esther Waters, while it undergoes no great change, is also gradually revealed, as events make more and more demands on her moral resources and form her character in the mind of the reader.

Whereas Dickens actively promotes his favored characters and encourages the reader to boo the villains, George Moore is coolly detached in French style. Moore's characters are neither purely good nor purely evil. William Latch is not the stock seducer, a wicked man who simply victimizes a servant girl and then deserts her. He tries to approach Esther and presumably make amends after their intercourse, but he finds her irate and unapproachable. Moore could easily have made the young preacher Fred Parsons a totally obnoxious representative of a narrow and

overbearing Christianity, but he does not. Parsons, while he overdoes his preaching of the second coming, is a warm-hearted young man who genuinely forgives Esther and accepts her without self-righteous remonstrance. Moore may exaggerate the flaws of Olive Barton, Fred Scully, and Lord Dungory, but he never pokes fun at his characters. Moore does show an authorial sympathy for Esther, but he does so with restraint. Esther Waters and Alice Barton do not become victims of their environments, as do Oliver Twist and Louisa Gradgrind, but in the cases of Moore's heroines, the process is primarily cerebral, unaided by external agents of good and unaccompanied by scenes of emotional extravagance. Kate Ede perishes by degrees, the slow process being necessitated by the facts of alcoholism, yet Moore keeps the reader at a distance, observing with frustration the heroine's failure to control her emotions. Dickens refuses to allow the reader to entertain feelings of sympathy or even neutral feelings toward Bitzer, Fagin, Sikes, Bounderby, Tulkinghorn, or Mr. Dombey. Sissy Jupe and Esther Summer-son are as faultless and angelic as the others are evil.

One admires the smooth-reading quality, the logic, and the technical flawlessness of Esther Waters. The skillful depiction of internal and external reality in the mind of Kate Ede is also commendable. Yet the reader prefers the great social panorama, the lively story, and the racy style of Dickens, in spite of the padding, the melodrama, the sentimentality, and the contrived plots. Moore's novels are more satisfying in terms of believability of events and psychological accuracy;

perhaps one could describe them as being more realistic than those of Dickens with respect to detail. Yet the creative talent of Dickens, using caricature, irony, humor, journalistic techniques, and melodrama all at once present a more convincing social reality. Dickens' purpose is always twofold: didactic and artistic. Even in Esther Waters George Moore did not set out to expose the evils of baby farms or gambling. Nor can one say that Moore's prime motive was to entertain. Complete fidelity to reality in terms of character and events often makes for a tedious story, and Esther Waters is at times tedious. Perhaps Moore's novels lie somewhere between those of Dickens and the naturalistic works of Zola. His reality is more prosaic than that of either writer, being less vivid than that of Dickens and less intense than that of Zola.

Unlike George Moore, George Eliot was near middle age when she began to write novels. Unlike Moore, she was a person of much learning, her books revealing a knowledge of mythology, history, English literature, and the economic and social facts of English life. In 1846 Eliot translated Strauss' Leben Jesu. Like George Moore, she had spent her childhood in a rural setting. Both writers were agnostics, but unlike Moore, Eliot had nothing of the iconoclast in her. She arrived at her agnosticism through intellectual processes and seemed to be always open to more light. Her portrayals of religious people--Dinah Morris, Mr. Farebrother, and Mr. Irwine--are entirely sympathetic. Moore paraded Alice Barton as one who

did not believe in the divinity of Christ and who refused to go to church. He made his own "conversion" to Protestantism a public and a literary affair.

Of Eliot's three major novels, Adam Bede lends itself best to comparison with George Moore's novels, for it, like Esther Waters and A Mummer's Wife, contains the theme of seduction. In Eliot's novels environment plays a unique role not before seen in English literature. Environment is the provincial community in Adam Bede. That community is made up of dozens of people, the major and minor characters of the novel, who represent varying degrees of perfection or imperfection in human life. While Eliot states in the novel that there is no private life that has not been shaped by a wider public life, she allows her characters the strength of free will to oppose and conquer flaws in their environment and in their own personalities. The characters shape the community as much as they are shaped by it, and on a personal level, deeds determine character as much as character determines deeds. Community shapes Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede more than does the influence of family or a single person, and the influence of the community is benign, for it is a complex force dominated by that which is best in many people.

The community can be considered the protagonist of Adam Bede, and Bede himself is the representative of the community. In addition to the major characters of the novel, there are

many other partially sketched citizens of Hayslope and its environs. The cast is huge and varied: the unpopular, grouchy old Squire Donnithorne; Joshua Rann, the shoemaker; Jonathan Burge, the carpenter; Mr. Casson, the Donnithornes' jolly butler; Mrs. Irwine, the rector's regal mother; Mrs. Pomfret, who teaches Hetty needlework; Mr. Craig, the gardener; Bartle Massey, the schoolmaster; four-year-old Totty Poyser; Chad Cranage, the blacksmith; Bessy Cranage, his worldly daughter; and many more. Even animals, such as Adam's dog, Gyp, Arthur's horse, Meg, and Massey's dog, Vixen, are seen as part of the community. Eliot's intent is to draw a complete community. She takes the daily activities of her characters seriously, describing them at work, at leisure, and at worship. Several chapters are dedicated to the fete which marks Arthur Donnithorne's coming of age. Adam Bede, Mrs. Poyser, and Hetty Sorrell are often pictured at work. Relations between the gentry and the common folk are important as are the interactions of all the characters with one another.

Adam Bede, with a name suggestive of Biblical patriarch and ancient Saxon savant, is, as representative of the community, a man for all time. He is not outstandingly handsome, but tall, roughly hewn, respected, and possessing a dynamic personality. Eliot describes him as "not just average," however, and her repeated reminders that the blood of the peasant and the artisan flow in his veins would seem to indicate that she intended him to be a type as well as an individual.

Adam Bede is anything but a self-made man. He learned his trade from his father before the latter took to drink, and his industry and steadfastness came to him naturally, as part of his peasant's heritage. All that Adam can really call his own is his personal defects. He is hot-tempered, often intolerant of others' flaws and undiscerning with respect to the character of the woman he loves. Adam is twenty-six when the novel begins, and the ensuing story is an account of the final stages of maturation and polishing which this scion of the peasantry undergoes. Adam does not mature and outgrow his flaws on his own. It is largely a process of community.

Experience alone gives Adam some insight into his shortcomings. When his drunken father drowns, Adam experiences the finality of death, realizing that he will never again come home and ask where his father is. He also thinks of the many occasions on which his scolding caused his inebriated father to lower his eyes in shame, knowing that he could never make it up to his father. Only when it is too late is Adam able to appreciate what his father had done for him in better days. Seth Bede, who is more tolerant of and patient with failings in others, has no such regrets. Adam is able to see that his brother possesses certain good qualities which he lacks.

The author intervenes occasionally to plead with the reader not to be too harsh in his judgment of Adam for loving a vain and shallow girl. It is natural, she explains, to attribute much good to a girl as uncommonly beautiful as Hetty and

to overlook grave faults. Other characters in the story have a more accurate assessment of Hetty's personality. Her aunt, Mrs. Poyser, calls Hetty a peacock, and Mrs. Pomfret and Dinah Morris express their apprehension about the effects Hetty's beauty will have on her. Although Adam would seem to have ample evidence of Hetty's shallowness and vanity, his love for her does not falter even after he witnesses Hetty and Arthur's tryst in the forest. Not even the contrast of Dinah's goodness, generosity, and depth of character seems to effect any insight into Hetty's personality in Adam. It is only after Hetty's trial and transportation that Adam is truly attracted to the goodness in Dinah.

Reverend Irwine, Bartle Massey, Arthur Donnithorne, and others play roles in the maturation of Adam Bede. Reverend Irwine dissuades Adam from thinking of vengeance, assuring him that Arthur's own conscience will cause him long and hard suffering. He accompanies Adam to Stoniton, the site of Hetty's trial, where Adam can do some good. Bartle Massey, the schoolmaster, stays with Adam in Stoniton out of fear that Adam, in his confusion and depression, might harm himself. Meanwhile Reverend Irwine tends to Adam's affairs at home. It is Dinah Morris who acquaints Adam with Hetty's suffering and brings them together in a scene of reconciliation. After Hetty's transportation she is instrumental in helping Adam to recover from his despondency. By the time Adam and Arthur meet accidentally in the woods, Adam is able to see that Arthur is indeed suffering. He conquers his anger, and the two

are reconciled.

Characterization in Adam Bede is not only a function of community but complex and varied, with much attention to psychological accuracy. Almost midway in the novel, Eliot makes a pause in the narration to justify and explain her portrayal of Reverend Irwine. In Chapter Seventeen she defines realism as "the faithful representing of commonplace things." Her Reverend Irwine is not a cold-hearted divine, engrossed in thoughts of theological controversy. Although he enjoys little luxuries and comforts, he is thoroughly involved in the lives of his parishioners in a unselfish way. He is dedicated to the well-being of his two unmarried, middle-aged sisters and his mother. He serves gentry and common folk alike and is always at hand when he is needed, knowing when to listen and when to speak. Irwine does not resent Dinah Morris and her Methodist preaching; he is genuinely interested in the young woman and admires her selflessness.

None of Eliot's rustics is an idealized, simple-minded peasant. Mrs. Poyser is a crusty, industrious dairywoman who is unafraid to stand up to the old Squire. Yet she is sensitive enough not to scold and embarrass Hetty in Adam's presence. Lisbeth Bede, the old mother of Adam and Seth, is querulous and tearful, given to scolding her sons for petty and imagined offenses and shortcomings. Always peevish, she tells them repeatedly that it would be better if she were in her grave. Her idea of a compliment is to tell Dinah that her

porridge does not turn her stomach. Eliot's sympathetic treatment of human failings is also seen in her portrayal of the misogynist schoolmaster, Bartle Massey. Massey, who is lame and unattractive, always rants about the weaknesses of woman-kind, carrying his woman-hating so far as to include his own female dog.

Eliot's portrayal of Hetty Sorrell and Arthur Donnithorne is as complex and sympathetic as her treatment of these minor characters. Hetty's character is revealed in various ways. Sometimes other characters make observations about the dangers of such beauty as Hetty's in a peasant girl. Mrs. Poyser reminds Hetty that she is going to a funeral and not to a wedding when Hetty takes a long time to get ready for church. Hetty is seen stealing glances at herself in the polished furniture and observed behaving peevishly when little Totty disturbs her frock at a party. In addition to the comments of other characters and Hetty's own words and actions, there are statements of fact and conjecture by the author. It is all subtly done. Eliot, who is fond of analogies, likens Hetty to a kitten, a bird, and a pet. She states that Hetty has no special feelings towards her home with the Poyzers, and she says that Hetty had never read a novel and probably would find the words too difficult. Eliot makes Hetty attractive to the reader and makes him apprehensive about her welfare early in the novel. During her trial for child-murder, Hetty withdraws completely from human contact. Through the influence of Dinah

Morris, however, she becomes truly human, forgiving Arthur and being forgiven by Adam.

Arthur Donnithorne is as complex as Adam Bede. Like Bede, he suffers and matures. He is popular with the tenants, who look forward to the day when he will replace the irascible old Squire as their landlord. Arthur is not a callous seducer who toys with Hetty's affections. Although he realizes that his attentions to the peasant girl can never lead to marriage and will cause her suffering, he loves her and cannot resist the temptation to be with her. He cries when he thinks of the effect his farewell letter will have on Hetty. Arthur struggles with his conscience and sets out to confide in Reverend Irwine, but he cannot bring himself to speak. When Adam Bede discovers the affair, Arthur feels the loss of Adam's respect very keenly. All he can do for Hetty is have her sentence commuted from hanging to transportation. When Arthur promises to leave the estate for good and persuades the Poysers and Adam to stay, the reader is satisfied that he has made the best possible sacrifice.

In Mill on the Floss the community is narrower, being a clan consisting of the Tullivers and their relatives on both sides. The novel is a history of interactions and loyalties within this enlarged family that determine Maggie's conduct. Out of loyalty to her priggish brother and to her cousin, Lucy Deane, she resists the temptation to put personal happiness first and elope with her cousin's fiance. Feelings of sisterly

love prompt Maggie to row a boat to save her brother, Tom, from the flood. She is received warmly by Tom and dies in his embrace. In Middlemarch Eliot is once more concerned with social and moral issues against the background of community. That novel examines intricate human relationships among the inhabitants of a town and its surrounding countryside. The pretty, but shallow and extravagant Rosamond eventually comes to terms with her defects and lives her life successfully as a mother and wife. Her husband, Lydgate, comes to see the impossibility of making great strides in scientific medicine while working as a provincial English doctor. The central character, Dorothea Brooke, learns that happiness can be found in the give and take of marriage and not in seeking martyrdom for a noble cause. As in Adam Bede, these changes are effected by the benign influence of community.

Whereas environment is chiefly evil in Dickens and its effects are overcome through individual efforts and the aid of individuals who are agents of good, it is a benign and formative force in the complex psychological development of Eliot's characters. The environment of community is also essential in the novels of Zola, but it is a malign agent that destroys. George Moore does not treat environment in a consistent way as does George Eliot. Kate Ede becomes the victim of environment not because that environment is overwhelmingly powerful, but because she has personal defects over which she has no control. Olive, Cecilia, and May are definitely products and victims of

the Irish social milieu, but the heroine of A Drama in Muslin, Alice Barton, likewise a product of her environment, sees through the empty values of her social class, eschews them and emigrates, thus avoiding such victimization. Esther Waters follows a third and different pattern. She is not defeated by her environment, nor does she rise above it or extricate herself in any other way. She simply endures the hardships of her place in life and succeeds, remaining at the conclusion of the novel essentially the person she was at the beginning. Thus, while environment is a benignly formative factor for Eliot, it plays no consistent role in the novels of Moore. One can succumb to it, one can leave it, or one can adapt oneself to it.

Moore's characters are fewer in number and seem simple and wooden in contrast to Eliot's creations of sensitive psychological perception. Kate Ede seems to be all uncontrollable emotion, and Alice Barton and Esther Waters appear to be strictly cerebral superwomen with no emotional life. Perhaps the reader finds the good that accrues to the major characters of Adam Bede and Middlemarch less than believable, but he allows the author this indulgence in the light of all that these characters have come through. As victims of seduction, Kate Ede and Esther Waters are less satisfying than Hetty Sorrell, for Kate simply deteriorates and Esther simply endures, while the shallow and vain Hetty finally comes alive after her reconciliation with Adam and her brief relationship with Dinah Morris. A final difference between the two novelists is suggested by George Eliot's definition of realism as "the faithful

representing of commonplace things." Hetty Sorrell, Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Adam Bede, Rosamond Vincy, and Dorothea Brooke all represent types of humanity known to the reader, while Kate Ede, Alice Barton, and Esther Waters seem to be exceptional, although still entirely believable, people. Most young women do not follow Kate's path of self-destruction. Most young women of the Irish aristocracy did not acquire Alice's insights into her society. Most young mothers of illegitimate children do not experience Esther's success. Like Zola, George Moore is preoccupied with the effects of events on the physical life and mental processes of his characters. To some extent he is interested in the emotions in A Mummer's Wife, but this interest is that of a detached observer. When reading a novel of George Eliot, one experiences a sense of participation in the emotional and moral development of the characters.

A comparison of George Moore and Thomas Hardy would, on the surface, suggest many similarities. Both were largely self-tutored men, Hardy having made more of his formal education than did Moore. Both wrote under the influence of the determinism of nineteenth century science. Both encountered the opposition of the circulating libraries and the general reading public. Both ceased writing realist novels at about the same time. After the furor occasioned by the publication of Jude the Obscure in 1895, Hardy ceased writing novels altogether. After the publication of Esther Waters in 1894, Moore turned to esoteric themes of religion and music. Both were

considered influential men of letters in their lifetimes.

The reader of Esther Waters is struck by its similarity in many points to Tess of the D'Urbervilles. In both novels a poor girl who leaves home to go into service becomes pregnant with an illegitimate child. Each meets another man with whom she has a relationship and then returns to the seducer. Hardy allows the baby to die, however, while Moore's baby grows up to become a fine young man. Whereas Esther's preacher, Fred Parsons, accepts her and forgives her sin, Angel Clare, the son of a rector, cannot accept and forgive Tess's sin. (Both men have caricatured names with religious overtones.) Fred does not excuse Esther, but Angel admits that Tess was more sinned against than sinning. Esther makes a firm decision to renounce her upright preacher and has a more or less successful marriage with her seducer. Tess bravely waits for Angel to return to her and finally capitulates, entering into a relationship with the unscrupulous Alec. Esther outlives her husband and returns to a quiet life at Woodfield. Tess kills her lover and seducer, becomes a fugitive from the law with her husband, and is apprehended and hanged. Moore had denigrated the novels of Hardy on many occasions, singling out Tess of the D'Urbervilles for special criticism. Moore said that "Hardy popularized pessimism and coaxed his readers into drinking from an old tin pot a beverage that had hitherto been offered to them in golden and jewelled goblets."¹ Moore

¹ Brown, p.74.

described Hardy as "George Eliot's miscarriage" and added: "He [Hardy] cannot write at all, and his machine-made plots are just absurd. Look at the way he drags in those trivial and unessential episodes merely in order to make use of the moonlight. I recall that absurd scene in Tess of the--er-- that Tess book, where the man (what's his name?) carries Tess over the plain at night. Moonlight, of course." There are so many coincidences that one cannot avoid assuming that Esther Waters, written in 1894, was Moore's answer to Tess of the D' Urbervilles, which was published in 1891.

In Hardy's novels, particularly in The Return of the Native (1878), Tess of the D' Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure (1895), environment is of preponderant importance. In The Return of the Native Egdon Heath is really the protagonist. It is a bleak, wild, Tartarean region sprinkled with bonfires suggestive of primitive pagan rites. The personalities of Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildeve seem to be extensions of the Heath. Vestiges of Celtic, Roman, Saxon, and medieval history, folklore, and superstition lurk behind a sophisticated, modern surface. Descriptions of nature, along with accounts of sheep-shearings and harvest festivals, are essential to Far from the Madding Crowd. In Jude the Obscure Christminster is a mysteriously inaccessible citadel of scholarship and religion.

Nearly half of Tess of the D' Urbervilles is dedicated to

² As quoted in Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 376.

the development of environment. After the death of the Durbeyfield's horse, Prince, early in the novel, Tess's little brother Abraham attributes the tragedy to the fact that we live on a blighted star. Tess is spurred on by feelings of guilt over Prince's death to agree to apply to the rich D'Urbervilles, supposedly her kin, for a position. The natural setting in which they live is characterized by a forest of primeval date with trees not planted by the hand of man and covered with Druidical mistletoe. Hardy associates antiquity with evil, not only with respect to nature but also with respect to the ancient line of the D'Urbervilles. Accordingly, at the conclusion of the novel, Tess the murderess is apprehended at Stonehenge, lying prostrate in victim-like repose on a huge monolith of ancient pagan origin. Tess's confused state of mind at the time of her seduction corresponds to the "faint luminous fog" of the out-of-the-way place in which it occurs. After her desertion by Angel Clare, Tess seeks employment as a swede-hacker in an area of southern England that is most inhospitable. The barrennes of the countryside corresponds to Tess's own poverty of spirit.

Critics frequently note the elements of Greek tragedy in Hardy's novels. His characters do not understand and cannot cope with chance, their own impulses, and social and physical forces in their environment. The Hardy world is a place of evil unmitigated by good. Whereas Zola is always the objective observer of cause and effect, Hardy allows his characters

to be buffeted about by chance, always a grim force in the Hardy world. Cause and effect seems to be at work on the surface in Tess of the D' Urbervilles, but in a way that seems quite contrived. The revelation of John Durbeyfield's kinship to the ancient D' Urbervilles and the death of Prince coincide as rather contrived causes for Tess's agreeing to go to the D' Urberville mansion to seek employment. Much of the novel's development relies upon chance meetings of characters, with Izz Huett, Alec D' Urberville, and Farmer Groby appearing in seemingly odd but convenient places and with incredible frequency. Sometimes one has the impression that the action is taking place on one or two acres of land. By chance Tess's letter of confession to Angel Clare goes under the rug. By chance Angel just misses finding Tess still with her family before she capitulates to the attentions of the diabolic Alec D' Urberville. The novel contains an unbelievable chain of events with poor Tess's misfortunes so numerous that only the most credulous reader believes Hardy. A somnambulant Angel Clare carries Tess across a raging stream, places her in an empty coffin at a deserted abbey, returns to his hotel and knows nothing of this nocturnal escapade the following day. Then Hardy would have the reader believe chapters later that had Tess told Angel of the incident the next morning, all would have been well between them. Preposterous melodrama relies heavily on coincidence and irrational turns of mind.

Zola's novels supposedly had no predetermined plots. Each

novel was an organic accretion made up of a series of causes and effects. A Hardy novel, as critics note, is as symmetrical and deliberately composed as a sonata. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Bathsheba Everdene begins with Gabriel Oak, moves to Sergeant Troy, then to Boldwood, then very briefly back to Troy, and ends with Oak. This can be schematized as 12321. In Jude the Obscure the plot is as symmetrical as a Renaissance facade: Jude and Arabella; Sue and Phillotson; Jude and Sue; Sue and Phillotson; and Jude and Arabella. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles the heroine is coupled with Angel Clare briefly at the beginning, then with Alec D'Urberville, again with Angel, again with Alec, and finally with Angel.

It follows that the characters in such an intensely bleak and mysterious milieu as Wessex should be something other than fles-and-blood people. Jude Fawley finds in Sue Bridehead an ethereal, bodiless creature who attracts but does not satisfy. Mr. Phillotson observes that Sue and Jude are one person split in two. Sue and Jude's Aunt Drusilla warns them that marriage in their family can bring nothing but tragedy. Little Father Time, the aged child of Jude and Arabella, is an eery creation. Eustacia Vye, whose epithet is "Queen of the Night," is a sensual, wild, mysterious, "pagan-eyed" young woman with "the raw material of a divinity." Damon Wildeve, "a kind of Rousseau of Egdon," is bewitched by Eustacia. Susan Nunsuch has "the solitude of the Heath" in her face.

In his portrayal of Tess, Hardy apparently tried to create

a girl who is more human and more common than Sue Bridehead or Eustacia Vye. She has in her an inherent taint, that of being the latter-day descendant of an ancient but now effete aristocratic family with a heritage of evil, a fact which is suggestive of Thomas Mann's old patrician families in Buddenbrooks and Tristan, which are shot through with physical and moral decadence at the appearance of art in later generations. But Tess is in most respects a normal girl, loyal to family, hard-working, and church-going. It is precisely these laudable, traditional values that cause her downfall. Had she been more selfish, she would have pursued her dream of becoming a teacher and refused to apply to her "kin" for a position that might help her family. Her return to an intimate relationship with D' Urberville is precipitated by the death of her father and the subsequent destitution of her mother and little brothers and sisters. Had she not been industrious and self-reliant, she might have applied to Angel Clare's parents for assistance and lived in ease until her husband's return. Tess gives up some of the teachings of Christianity based upon the supernatural, but she never relinquishes her belief in the moral teachings of Christ. Her pathetic baptism of her dying child is proof of the importance of the teachings of the church to her. Tess's fate is determined by chance and blind trust in the goodness of humanity, this simple trust in Alec D' Urberville and Angel Clare being tragically misplaced. By the end of the novel, the many tragedies she has experienced seem to have undermined

her sanity, and she gives way to anger and fury, killing Alec D' Urberville.

D' Urberville is an enigmatic figure. His laugh is diabolical and never good-natured. His love for Tess seems to be selfish but genuine and at the same time the result of bewitchment; yet Tess is no sultry temptress. Alec's brief conversion to a fanatical form of Christianity appears to be earnest, and his quick backsliding can only be explained in terms of an essential evilness in his nature which he simply cannot overcome. It is difficult to accept his statement that he has given up preaching for love of Tess. The reader wonders whether his offer to help Tess's destitute family is partly sincere generosity or nothing but an attempt to subjugate Tess to his will. He is a strange and perhaps not entirely human creation.

Angel Clare is more satisfactory as a type of humanity. The reader can imagine the existence of a dreamy idealist, liberal in his speech and thoughts but somehow conservative and traditional in the affairs of real life. It is incongruous, however, that such a man would confess his own sexual immorality, seek and obtain Tess's forgiveness and then take three years to forgive Tess a similar sin. In spite of his change of heart and the effects of a severe illness at the end of the novel, it is also difficult to accept his lack of reaction to Tess's confession of murder.

The remaining minor characters of the book are sketchily

and rigidly drawn. Joan Durbeyfield is as simple and impractical as her improvident husband John, whose preoccupation is with the glorious days of his ancestors. Izz Huett, Marian, and Retty are unbelievable in their disintegration of personality after losing Angel to Tess. Reverend Clare represents a type of Christianity which glories in form and doctrine and shows little charity. Mercy Chant is a feminine manifestation of the same.

One always has a feeling of *déjà-vu* when reading Hardy. While no character is an exact duplication of an earlier one, Gabriel Oak reminds one of Clym Yeobright; Alec D'Urberville is reminiscent of Sergeant Troy; Sue Bridehead is a citified version of Eustacia Vye; and so on. Often there are relatively "untainted" objective observers in Hardy novels, such as Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, Donald Farfrae, and Mr. Phillotson, against whose examples the abnormality of the others seems even more abnormal.

There is no Moore world as there is a Hardy world. What little atmosphere there is in Moore's novels is created through development of character and through events. Hanley of the Five Towns, the Shelbourne Hotel, County Galway, Woodfield, and the King's Head have no special powerful aura of their own. All the reader knows of Kate Ede's home is that it is rather comfortable, and that Bible verses are hung throughout the rooms. The sickroom is unpleasant, but not oppressively so, for when Ralph Ede is feeling well, he is an agreeable man.

George Moore preferred the antiseptic, impersonal French style to a highly charged atmosphere such as that of Wessex.

Like Hardy's, Moore's best creations are women. Yet no mystique surrounds Kate, Alice, Cecilia, Oliver, or Esther. In this respect they are more believable as people than even the most neutral of Hardy's characters. Kate's petulant dissatisfaction, Cecilia's deformed mind and body, Alice's uncomplaining perseverance could conceivably be found in real life, but who knows a Sue Bridehead or a Eustacia Vye? Moore consciously develops character. Kate Ede moves steadily downward into total dissipation. Olive moves from vain ebullience to bored disillusion and resignation. Cecilia's physical deformity intensifies the growth of her mental deformity in a society that values physical charms. Esther, a helpless, victimized servant, becomes through sheer endurance a self-sufficient young woman and a successful mother. Hardy's characters, on the other hand, move through a series of tragedies to final destruction. Eustacia Vye drowns herself after her husband, Clym Yeobright, goes blind and she finds herself condemned to be the plain housewife of a complacent and no longer inspired furze-gatherer. Sue Bridehead loses her children and gives up Jude after inexplicable turns of conscience force her to view her union with Jude as sinful. She lives out her life with Phillotson, who is repugnant to her. Tess strives to live a life in conformity to accepted moral values but is thwarted by circumstances and other people. Kate Ede is destroyed because of something within, whereas Hardy's women perish because of

factors in their external environment.

George Moore, in A Mummer's Wife and in A Drama in Muslin, preferred the organic plot of Zola, which he adapted to a minimal, preconceived plot. The deterioration in Kate's personality unfolds slowly and naturally. Dissatisfaction is the key to Kate's downfall. Through Miss Hender and Dick Lennox she sees the possibility of a more exciting life. She samples this life, but she soon finds it wanting, thinking that a home and family are what she really needs. After the baby is born Kate finds herself restricted and confined to her room caring for the infant. She becomes jealous of Dick's professional life. She takes brandy medicinally and soon habitually. First inhibitions and then all self-control disappear by degrees and death ensues. Moore builds all of this around a few key events. A Drama in Muslin is the story of the growth of character and conscience in Alice Barton. Heredity, education, the influence of Mr. Hardinge, and insight into the hypocrisy and shallowness of the Irish aristocracy all work together in a believable way to develop values in the mind of the heroine. In both novels the significant events are purely mental.

In Esther Waters, however, Moore effectively combines preconceived plot with organic development. Esther begins as a servant girl at Woodfield. Troubles mount when she gives birth to an illegitimate child, and life is from then on an arduous ascent uphill for her. With marriage to William Latch, Esther's existence becomes somewhat easier. After successfully raising her son, she returns to a life of relative ease at

Woodfield. Occasionally during Esther's tortuous climb uphill, the reader becomes frustrated at her numerous misfortunes, which are unbroken by the briefest success and at the unflinching fortitude with which she meets them. Esther, like Kate, moves through a series of trying circumstances, but Kate's experiences are largely internal and mental, while Esther's are determined by external events. Kate is never in control of the course of her life, whereas Esther never fails to meet a challenge.

The contrast between Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Esther Waters points out the principal difference between the oeuvre of Hardy and that of Moore: the former created a realism of emotions and passions; the latter wrote a controlled and more cerebral realism. Hardy traces his characters' wildly emotional responses to circumstances which they cannot understand or control, and Moore documents the mental processes of heroines as they react to their environments. Even Kate Ede, who is in a sense all emotion, responds to her circumstances in ways that seem rational to her. Time has favored the product of the emotions. George Moore's novels have not become fare for college literature classes, nor has a George Moore Society ever been established in Japan or anywhere else.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

George Moore was a most perplexing literary figure in terms of his personal background, the times in which he wrote, and his three major novels which can be termed realist works. He had three distinct cultural roots: Irish, French, and English. None of these roots was profound or predominant in its influence on Moore, but they worked together to produce a realism that was distinctly different from the realist tradition that had preceded Moore. When Moore left Ireland in 1873 he was certainly not steeped in the Irish literary tradition. Indeed he was not versed in the literature of any country nor even in the works of a single author. (Moore's real "Irish" period began in 1901, after all his realist works had been completed.) Ireland is felt, however, in Esther Waters, where childhood experiences at Moore Hall furnished the background of the servants' life and horseracing. In A Drama in Muslin and Parnell's Island Ireland is central. In both works Moore assumes the role of sociologist collecting data on the peasantry and the aristocracy. Objective observation brings Moore to the conclusion that there is no worthwhile culture in either class. Alice Barton's emigration to England is a statement of Moore's judgment on the cultural and social life of his homeland. Although Moore spurned Ireland, she had provided him

with themes and experiences.

George Moore was influenced by many French writers, including Zola, Flaubert, Huysmans, and Balzac. Perhaps the person and work of Manet, who painted middle-class people in middle-class clothes in middle-class scenes, was as significant as any French literary influence on Moore, for it was this influence that kept Moore from overindulgence in naturalistic ugliness. Moore took what he liked from Zola, the method of detached, objective observation, but he reproached Zola for having no style. A Mummer's Wife is the result of Moore's adaptation of Zolaism. There is the objectivity and the degeneration of the principal character that one finds in Zola's works, yet Moore holds himself aloof from the mire of Zola's naturalism. Kate Ede can be seen more as a woman who suffers for violation of the moral code than as the helpless victim of heredity and social phenomena. Other features of the novel that are anti-naturalistic are the ennoblement of Dick Lennox and the intense concentration on the mental processes of the heroine. Esther Waters is a novel that relies on naturalistic techniques and has a distinctly naturalistic decor. Yet Esther, by the strength of her personality and character, overcomes the powerful influences of environment. Whereas Gervaise Coupeau succumbs to her environment and "dies of poverty," Esther Waters becomes a stronger person because of poverty. Moore's statement that Esther Waters was "pure Flaubert" is misleading. One could say, however, that while Emma Bovary is an example of decadence in the upper classes, Esther Waters

is an example of fortitude in the lower classes. In this way one can see both a parallel and a difference between the two heroines. If, however, Moore was saying that he had worked at style and diction in the celebrated manner of Flaubert, one would probably have to say that he succeeded. The French influence on Moore's realist works was more extensive than the Irish influence, yet George Moore was not a mere imitator who simply devoured and regurgitated French themes and techniques. He was selective in his use of Gallic materials and methods.

Hone quotes Moore as saying, "I was full of France, and France had to be got rid of or pushed out of sight before I could understand England."¹ Obviously Moore did not wish to see himself as a French writer in the English language.

The Nineties in England was a period in which many forces were at work and for which no single representative in literature can be named. That there was a definite effort to escape from and alter the traditional course of English literature can be seen in the popularity of French writers, Ibsen, American, and Russian novelists. Moore's unrelenting diatribes against Hardy, Conrad, and James show him opposed to what his contemporaries were writing. But Moore spurned the whole tradition of British literature, summarily dismissing Shakespeare as greatly overrated and finding Jane Austen the only acceptable English novelist.

¹ As quoted in Hone, The Life of George Moore, p. 91.

The question, then, is whether Moore did succeed in writing novels that were not a continuation of the English realist tradition, and if so, what was distinctively different about his works. Most of the novels of Dickens can be characterized as based on social realities and in that sense realist works. His characters were caricatures of real-life types, and Dickens manipulates them for the social ends he has in mind. One might say that Dickens sacrificed reality in the creation of characters in the interest of creating a vivid and compelling social reality. With Eliot there is a shift of interest from action to personality. Certainly Eliot's portrayal of provincials of the peasantry and the upper classes is realistic with respect to psychology and not the product of the imagination. But Eliot too manipulates her characters, in that she pushes them through various experiences toward maturity and effectiveness as citizens. Hardy's reality is a reality of the external world. He deals with the bleak, life-threatening forces at work in the lives of men. His reality is generally one-sided, however, for evil is seldom relieved by good, especially in the later novels. His characters seem to be puppets who are helpless to confront or oppose this evil because they do not understand it.

What then is distinctive about the realist works of Moore? One thing is certainly the fact that for the first time in English literature one does not find an environment with a strong flavor of any kind. One does not feel oppressed by bleakness

as when reading Dombey and Son, terrified by omnipresent danger as when reading Oliver Twist, wrapt up in adventure as when reading Tom Jones, overwhelmed by black hopelessness as when reading The Return of the Native, or engulfed by the minutiae of familial happiness as when reading Emma. The characters themselves are central, and the reality of the individual is important. Moore does not say that the reality of Kate Ede, Esther Waters, and Alice Barton is typical of the rest of humanity. He does not insist that what they experience is what really does happen to human beings: it is only what can happen. The three heroines are completely different from one another and show three different reactions to environment: defeat, escape, and endurance. Also, Moore does not use a tightly structured plot with many improbable turns of events. Events unfold naturally and believably in such a way that the characters are not manipulated in fantastic and unique experiences. Finally, Moore examines mental processes without detailed and maudlin or morbid interest in the purely emotional. This combination of features in the novels of George Moore was definitely something new in the tradition of the English novel.

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